

#51

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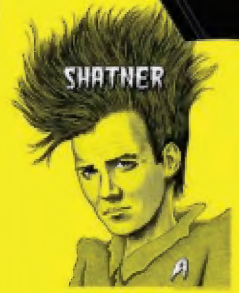
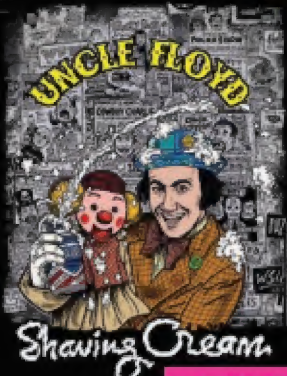
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Mark Sceurman
Mark Moran
Publishers/Editors

Joanne M. Austin
Senior Editor

Michelle Denholtz
Marketing Management

Wheeler Antabanez,
Matt Chrystal, Robert Gilinsky,
Todd Holritt, Matt Lake, Kate Philbrick,
Jesse P. Pollack, Rich Robinson
Correspondents

Heather Wendt Kemp
Editor In Freaks

X-Ray Burns
Animal Editor At Large

Glen Jones
All Things Asbury Park

Ken Pfeifer, State Director, MUFONNJ

Ryan Doan, Al Eufrazio, Joe Oesterle
Illustrators

Ryan Doan, Tiffany Harned,

Rusty Tagliareni
Photographers

Christina Mathews
Videographer

Chris Farinas • Diane Casazza
Michelle Denholtz
Advertising

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PO Box 1346, Bloomfield, NJ 07003

Office Phone: 973-256-2011 Fax: 973-812-5420

Inquiries: editor@weirdnj.com



ALIENS ON ROUTE 47

I caught some aliens jamming along the road on Route 47. They didn't seem concerned that I was photographing them. -Tony

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STUMP DROP BOX

I was driving down Cedar Grove Lane in Somerset, N.J. one afternoon and I noticed this huge mailbox made from the trunk of a tree. I'm not exactly sure what it is. Maybe a giant mouse, nonetheless it is quite a sight to see. It's the mailbox of a small family farm located behind a row of trees. When I stopped to take some pictures I also noticed another tree stump carving of a hand giving the peace sign or the sign of victory at the opposite end of the horseshoe driveway. All are visible from the road if you drive slowly in the daylight. -Nick Quig Clemente

Weird NJ Mail

Brisbane And Awful Memories

Dear Weird NJ:

I just read your excellent article on the Arthur Brisbane Child Treatment Center in Wall.

I've been intrigued by the facility since I first moved to Howell back in 2000. Before the entrance was barricaded, I used to drive up there quite often, but never dilly dallied for long, as I always got creeped out and felt I was being watched from one of the many abandoned buildings. I would flee before anything freaky occurred.

I can tell you, however, that a death most definitely did occur there, and it wasn't a medical incident, per se. Rather, it was straight up murder, or manslaughter, at the very least.

In 1998, a 17-year-old female patient named Kelly Young died from asphyxiation after being restrained by staff members via a "basket hold." An investigation was launched and a trial took place, but no guilt was found and no staff members were incarcerated for this heinous deed. You can read the report here:

<http://www.njpanda.org/PT5.html>

It seems Brisbane had a long, troubled history of patient abuse, and physical mistreatment was commonplace. Perhaps it was Kelly's restless spirit that gave me the willies each time I ventured there.

On a related note, a golf course sits across Atlantic Avenue from Brisbane, and it is not uncommon for golfers to line up in the driveway early each morning before the course opens, jockeying for a prized tee time. In fact,

a friend of mine used to do this quite often, and he told me that on more than one occasion, while waiting in his car, he would be roused by fervent knocking on his window. Upon rolling down his window, my pal would be confronted by a Brisbane "escapee," urgently seeking a ride to anywhere but that hellish "treatment center." While he never gave these troubled youth a lift, he did sympathize with their plight, and wasn't at all surprised to learn of Ms. Young's violent passing.

Regardless of what becomes of Brisbane, and what fate the great state of New Jersey decides to bestow upon it, the awful memories will remain, and who knows, Kelly Young's ghost may roam those eerie grounds for years to come. -Ken Coles

Yes, There Were Pirates And Monkeys In West Orange!

Dear Weird NJ:

In response to Michael Burke's letter in your #50 issue (congrats on the milestone and thanks so much for all the great stories you share about our amazing state); yes, yes and yes!

My mother grew up in West Orange and remembered all about the Admiral Benbow Inn. She said she and my aunts and uncles knew the pirate who would stand outside. There definitely were monkeys and she remembered parrots in cages as well. She had fun recalling the Admiral Benbow Inn and I loved hearing about it. Thanks for helping to keep Jersey history alive.

-Jaime Elliott

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Just So Happens...

Dear Weird NJ:

Every time I go upstairs, I feel a cold spot. It is said that in the 1800s an explorer built my house and then one night he was killed by a white group of Indians, similar to albinos. And it just so happens we live near Albino Village in Clifton. I also saw a group of people in white robes sacrificing a cow in my neighbor's backyard.

-John Wynn

Haunted Collage House

Dear Weird NJ:

I bought the back issue with the article on the Collage House in Sussex on Route 23. I remember that house and how it sat on the hill. I was always amazed at how beautiful it was in a dark way. I'm sad to see that it has been torn down.

Is that the same house in which there were violent hauntings? I don't remember the exact details but I do remember that the hauntings were violent toward the owner's wife and it got to a point where they moved out because nothing they did helped.

There were several investigations and everyone deemed the place extremely haunted. I'm not sure if I'm talking about the same place but I thought it was. -Rebecca



RIP To Our Pal Richie Zorzi

Dear Weird NJ:

Richie Zorzi, the bowling ball / rocking horse man from Kendall Park died at age 80 in November 2015. Just thought you'd like to know he hung onto Mark Scurman's business card. There was an estate sale at the house; most items were sold; some were still there. I got this. -Mike Kirsch

Spooked At The Doctors

Dear Weird NJ:

We work at a doctor's office in Plainfield, and really weird things happen there. Doors open on their own after you lock them, weird noises, etc.

There was one time when we first

opened the office under a different specialty. One of the girls left a cup of soda in the middle of the kitchen counter, and we all went to tour the office. All of a sudden we heard a really loud noise coming from the kitchen. When we went to check, the cup was

at least six feet away on the floor, like somebody had thrown it. On another day, one of the girls was alone in the office and turned on the TV so as not to feel too alone. She left the room and was listening to the TV from the other room, when the TV turned off by itself. She went to check and turned it back on. After five minutes it turned off again, so she decided to leave it off and continue working. About two minutes after she left the room it turned on by itself. It gets really scary here from time to time.

-The girls from Peds

Shades Chase

Dear Weird NJ:

I was driving down Shades of Death Road at night. Ten men ran out of the woods screaming with bats. They chased my car down a dirt road. After a few minutes I backed out and took off. I haven't been back there since.

-dj tibis

Filing A Complaint

Dear Weird NJ:

I went to Talamini Road in Bridgewater and I'm filing a complaint. I took a trip over there and the moan never happened and we followed exactly what you guys wrote on your website. -Domo

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Enjoying A Weird Life To The Fullest

Dear Weird NJ:

My name is Dylan O'Byrne, an NJ native, resident of South Orange, and I have a story that you might find interesting!

But before I say anything else... Your book was given to me by my grandmother when I was very young. It helped me to come to love Curtiss Wright and urban exploration. So thank you so much.

My whole life I've been regarded by my peers to be the wild and adventurous guy. I wasn't out hitting the bars, but I was out exploring. Whether that be camping a few days on my own on a snowy mountain,

me, and while he didn't know how I managed to get out and do all the things I do, that he could see I was truly living. He closed it out with an inside joke and that he hopes I continue to live my best life.

Well Tray'von, as much as I appreciated the kind words, I really wasn't living my best life when I received that message. That's when it hit me. That's when I realized that I was just going through the motions and something had to change. So I did the typical thing someone would do in reaction to such a clear message from the universe: I went out the next day and I bought a car (I had only owned a motorcycle up to this point). I did some research online for what I would need for this idea and I



exploring the abandoned urban landscape of the area, jumping off of cliffs, or traveling the world, I was "living." I was always searching for the next hidden gem, the next rush, the next moment that would have more people saying, "His life is like a movie," and asking me, "If music plays in my head while I do crazy stuff." Which by the way, it does.

But in the last year it would appear that I stopped living and I just started existing. I was working over 100 hours a week at a job that I am beyond appreciative of, but that caused me to be tired and not always looking to adventure. I hadn't realized how about money and working I had become until someone said happy birthday to me. Most of the birthday wishes I got were very simple and didn't extend beyond a happy birthday and enjoy the day. But one of those birthday wishes came with something extra special. It was from someone whom I had met at American Legion Jersey Boy's State, a week of leadership that you get nominated by your school system to attend after your junior year of high school. This man only met me that week, and since 2012 I had not seen him, aside from following one another on social media and having mutual friends. Well, the birthday wish he gave me was far greater than any I had ever received. Tray'von told me that he admired

bought it. I grabbed a map and charted the course. I sold my short term investments. I asked my boss for some time off.

Without telling my parents, my friends, my peers, my coworkers, I left the state of New Jersey and embarked on a road trip. Not just any road trip though... A road trip across the entirety of the United States of America with nothing but my car, some clothes, and a sense for adventure.

As of the time of writing this I am a month into my trip and have made public that I have left everything behind me. I have covered 13 states, had countless adventures, met dozens of beautiful amazing people from France, Australia, Canada and most all the states, spent every night in the back of my car, showered in gyms, ate in strange places, and saw even stranger things. I've come toe to toe with alligators in New Orleans (not in a park, like face to face), jumped out of a plane, learned of cultures that are often misunderstood, been held at knife point, and lived life like never before. I have seen more, heard more, felt more, and learned more than I have in all my years at college. I've halted just existing and I began to live again.

There is still a long road ahead of me and every day that I encounter a new problem I find a way to overcome it. People ask me every day

JERSEY SKIN



DOUBLE-ARMED JERSEY!

The artist that tattooed me is named Chris Strangebreu and his shop is called Old Glory Tattoo Co. in Asbury Park.

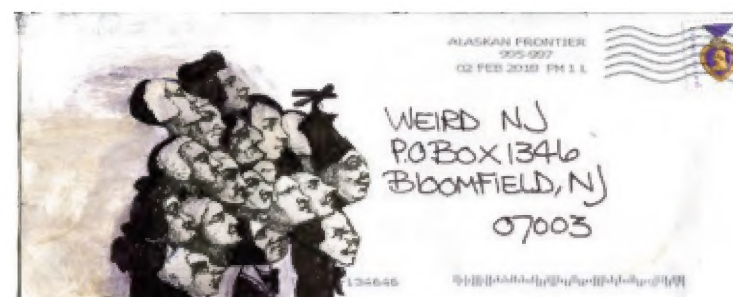
-Jeff Grossman, Marlton



how to do this, and how to do that, how to do what I'm doing, which brings me to the real reason I'm reaching out. Not because I'm an NJ native, not because I'm having fun, but because others are not. I want to teach, I want to show, I want everyone indoors on their phones to come do what I've been doing. It was only a few days into my trip that I realized I wanted to head up this campaign to enlighten the world so I started a channel for people to get a better understanding on how to make it happen. I'm starting a blog, allowing peo-

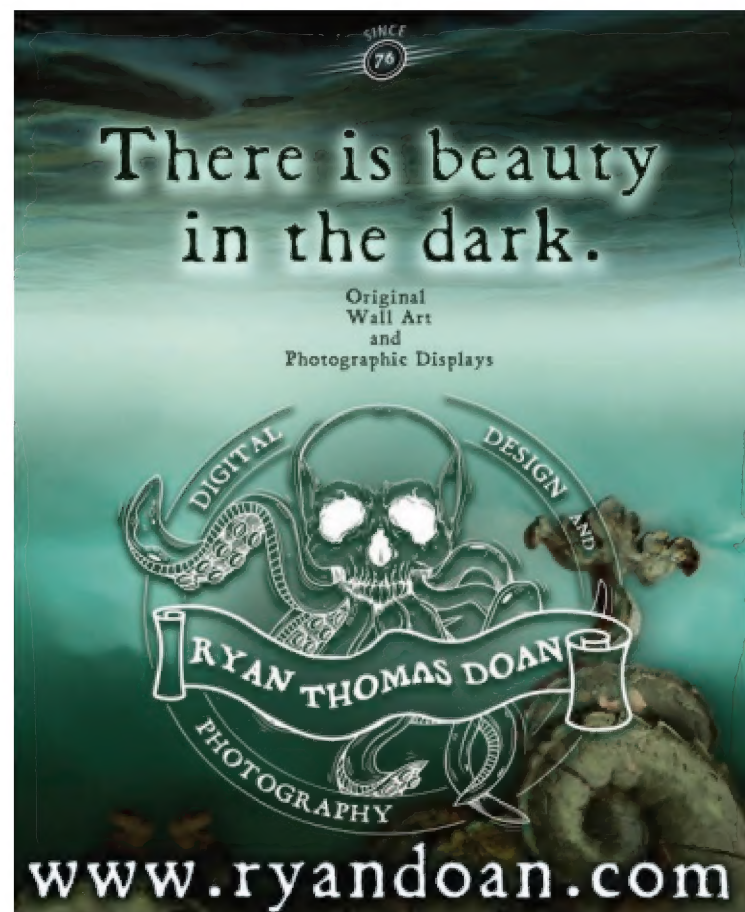
ple to message me whenever, and doing everything I can to show everyone that anyone can do this.

There was a young woman in South Carolina. She was the manager of a Hardee's. When I told her what I was



doing she called over her whole staff to hear the story as well. When I was done she said something that will stick with me the rest of my life: "This is the coolest thing that has ever happened to me." Me living should not be the coolest thing that she's ever done. She should be living, too. While many other countries encourage travel and adventure the culture of the U.S. does not. It encourages consumerism. It is imperative that that changes. I don't mean a vacation to Cancun to drink margaritas. I mean the work of finding your own way and seeing the things truly worth seeing.

If not telling my story, tell a story, put out an article, an opinion, provok-



ing and begging the idea of why we don't live, and why we're only existing.

I thank you for your time. Enjoy your night and your weekend as well!

I need to head to the next adventure: Encountering the ghosts of little

living that was on the *Titanic* (an ivy plant) is still around today (well...at least the clippings of it over the years keeping it alive).

Twenty years after that story was published in your magazine, I wrote to you about it for an update, and my write-up was included in Issue #45, page 8. I asked if anyone had an update. Nearly three years have passed and no one wrote in, or there weren't any new updates anyone knew about.

Still intrigued by the story, and hoping to find a piece of this "living" history from the *Titanic*, I started researching on my own. In the original story from 1995, it gives the owner's name, and that he was an owner of an antique shop as well, and its location. Easy enough right? Nope! I looked up the antique shop and could not find it. I then got close matches, and thought I may have found it, and when I called the shop, I asked if it had a different name back in 1995, and came up empty. So did other searches. But then I found a match on Etsy.

The name matched a similar location from back then and the fact that the same person just happened to have an antiques for sale on Etsy. I reached out to the person and he initially responded back by asking me who I was. When I gave him further info, he affirmed it was him, and that he still has the ivy plant, and that it



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continues to grow all over his place. In trying to obtain a small clipping of this history myself (as it said others did back in 1995) I was told NO, and that the 'entire collection of his Titanic memorabilia' would be going up for sale soon.

I still pushed forward, noting I wasn't interested in anything else, just a small piece of the Titanic lvy to be able to grow myself, and further asked about the story of it. He said it was too much effort to give or transfer a piece for sale in person as I requested, and his best (or should I say ONLY) offer back to me to be able to obtain a piece of this "Titanic lvy" is to buy an expensive item on his Etsy site (it was priced at like \$300 or so) and then he would send me a clipping of it in the mail.

I declined, as even if it was real, what he was asking for in return was ridiculous. I would like to believe the story of the plant is real, because it doesn't seem to have an angle to it for why it wouldn't be true, but then again, I now wonder. He wouldn't say anything about it story-wise, he wanted to profit big-time for a small clipping of it when back in 1995 he was

giving it to people for free supposedly, he also just happens to have all this other *Titanic* artifacts. So it makes you wonder about the plant just being an additional way to raise more interest in his other artifacts, and on top of all that there was some other story about him and the selling / buying of a slice of toast with a picture on it put up for sale on Ebay years ago, and it was another odd-money-making thing. So, unfortunately, it appears without any further proof, it seems more like a fake and made-up story. It would be nice to have someone come forward instead, and see that the story is proven true.

-Russell Martone

A Strange Chair?

Dear Weird NJ:

Do you happen to know anything about the wooden chair on the Northbound side of Route 18 in Old Bridge that's located under a tree? It's north of the Wawa if that is any help. I've never seen anyone sitting there but I first noticed it last year. It has not been moved since I first saw it. Is there any strange story related to it? Or is it possible it was just left there? Thank you for your time! -Sara

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Sara: Um, probably just left there.

-Eds.

Found Money

Dear Weird NJ:

An early 1970s a dollar bill came to me which had been stamped with words beginning, "HUMAN RIGHTS LIQUIDATED." It was in the days before the internet and I thought it was a clever way of spreading the word but I had no idea what it meant.

At the time I was teaching in a small black college outside of Birmingham—a time of fear, hatred, anger—and I being a naïve white professor teaching at a black college received all of those from much of the white community so the message affected me strongly.

Now, many years later I came across it while clearing out stuff from my past. Curious, I searched online and there was the *Weird US* site filling in the details. But I didn't find any mention of stamping your message on dollar bills!

Any suggestion what best I should do with it? -Ray

Ray: Spend it! -Eds.

Those Crazy Seventies With Crazy Kevin

Dear Weird NJ:

Did I ever tell you the story of Crazy Kevin? The gist was he used to walk around Highland Park in army fatigues all the time. He seemed pretty stoned and lived with his mom and was a Vietnam vet. We were in Highland Park High School at the time so this is the mid-seventies. He would stop by there often and just hang and smoke.

I worked in New Brunswick at the time. I noticed he was now dressing in total white like he just got off a camel in the desert. This was in the winter and he also took to wearing no shoes. I recall his bloody feet from wearing no shoes, too.

He also claimed he was Jesus. Now I knew he had gone off the deep end. Some weeks later he was walking the streets of Highland Park still in white but covered in blood. We heard he had just killed his mother. That was the last time we saw or heard of Crazy Kevin. -Paul Horvath

Although we may not be able to print every letter, we read them all! - Mark and Mark

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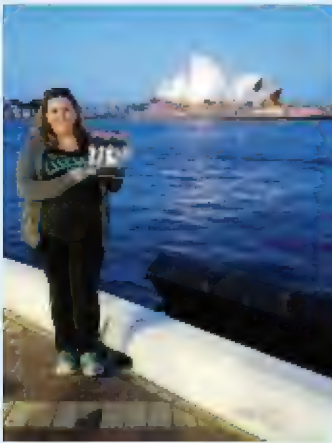


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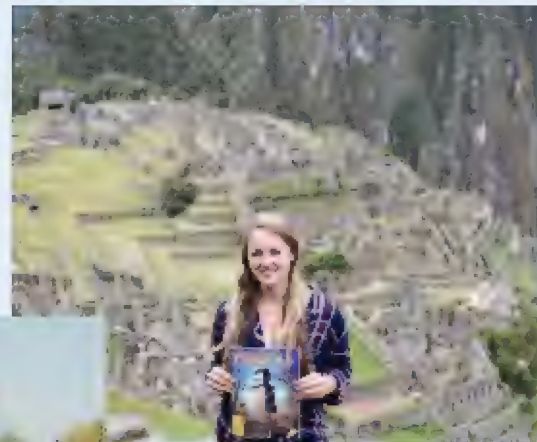
WEIRD ALL OVER



Giddy All, Thought you might get a kick out of this photo my daughter Kate just sent from her trip to Australia. She is posing with her copy of *Weird NJ* in Sydney with the famed Opera House in the background. It doesn't get much better than that Matey! -Tom K.



Greetings *Weird NJ* from Salento Colombia. -Mike and Vane



This year I finally got to cross off a bucket list item by going to Machu Picchu. It would be an honor to cross off another bucket list item by having my photo in *Weird NJ*. I'm proud to say I climbed to the top of that mountain with your magazine in my backpack. -Anna Latka



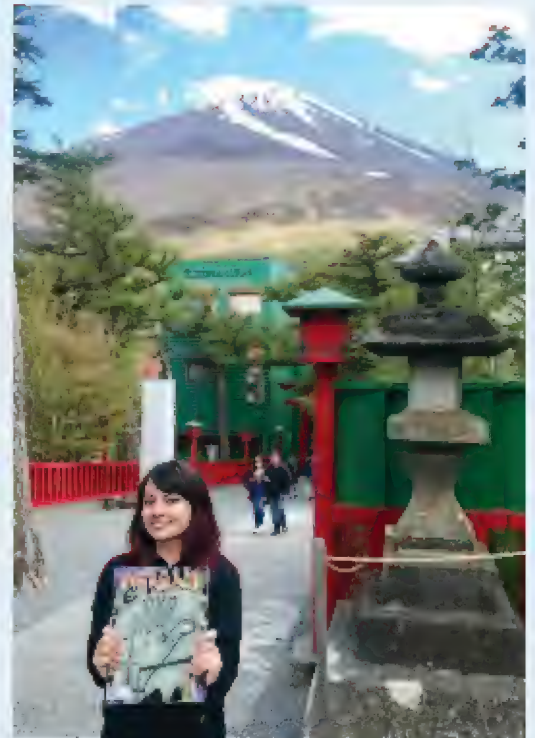
Here I am at the Amtrak station in Ashland, VA. with train #94 in the background, wearing a Trenton Thunder shirt promoting Case's Pork Roll, while reading the latest edition of *Weird NJ*. Who says you can't have it all. -Paul Verlander



I just wanted to say my mother and I have always enjoyed your magazines. I make sure to bring an issue with me on all of my travels. Here's a good picture of us in the cemetery of the Grafton ghost town outside of Zion National Park in Utah. Many of the graves here were settlers dating back to the 1860s, pretty interesting stuff. Keep up the great work and stay weird! -Shawn and Teresa of Garfield



My husband and I took a trip with family to Portugal this summer and took a photo with *Weird NJ* at this sign in the town we were visiting! -Pat and Ali Bellenger



I have returned from a trip to Japan last week and brought the latest issue of *Weird NJ* with me. I had my boyfriend take a picture of me with the magazine and Mount Fuji behind me. I was at the fifth station of Mount Fuji when this picture was taken. We were lucky to have Mount Fuji appear because it is usually cloudy there. We had visibility of the mountain for only 15 minutes until it vanished in the clouds again. -Mae Lynne



This is my husband Joe Nanni with his latest issue at the Parthenon. He has every issue. -Jennifer

Weird NJ News

Compiled By Joanne M. Austin



NOW THAT'S A LAWN ORNAMENT!

Saw this in my home town on Mercer St. in Wallington. -Christopher Chryc

We love to get news and updates from Weird NJ readers! For the best chance of our seeing them and giving you credit, please send them to editor@weirdnj.com. Note that credit consists of your name appearing in glorious print at the end of your submission and not a free issue.

USS LING MIGHT RUN SILENT FOR GOOD: In Issue #48, we featured a story on the USS Ling, a 312-foot long, 2,500-ton World War II submarine that was the centerpiece of the NJ Naval Museum in Hackensack. Closed to the public after access to it was swept away by Superstorm Sandy in 2012, its fate was uncertain. Stuck in the muck at the edges of the Hackensack River, the Ling required significant effort and money to be moved, which nobody wanted to take responsibility for. More recently, the land that the museum building and sub are located on was sold, with plans to add waterfront condos and upscale shopping. The museum was scheduled to be demolished in September, and the venerable but sad old sub didn't seem to fit in to the new vision, either...but it's not exactly patriotic to wish it into a cornfield. Unfortunately, as reported in NorthJersey.com, in August vandals broke into the sub. The vice president of the Submarine Memorial Association told NorthJersey.com that the vandals cut locks and opened hatches to the bilges, which are the lowest compartments of the submarine, flooding it with 10 feet of water. They also stole "four bronze

plaques, dedicated to the 52 United States submarines lost during World War II and the sailors who helmed them." A follow-up story indicated that the Ling may be beyond repair, and that museum officials were waiting to hear from the U.S. Navy, who donated the Ling years ago and still oversee it, for next steps. Some city officials NorthJersey.com reached out to expressed disgust and hopes that the vandals would be caught.

FRED THE GOAT FREES LIVESTOCK IN HACKETTSTOWN: In August, the *New York Post* reported on a mass breakout of "dozens" of goats and sheep in Hackettstown that may have been thanks to a "rogue goat" that locals named Fred. The animals were being kept at an auction house until their new owner/butcher was able to pick them up. Around 9:30 that night, they escaped "through an unsecured gate" and it took locals about an hour to catch most, but not all, of them. It was thought that Fred, who had escaped the same auction house a year or so ago and has been seen in the area from time to time, may have been responsible for setting them free. In fact, Fred showed up earlier that day, head butting "the gate holding newly corralled animals multiple times in an apparent effort to let them back out." Fred's no dope. Despite being shooed away, the auction house manager told the *Post* that he was pretty sure Fred was behind the later breakout, making Fred a strong candidate for our newest local legend.

CALICO THE CLOWN UPDATE: A redevelopment plan for the land on which Calico, "the Evil Clown" of Middletown stands has been fast tracked, according to a July 2018 article in the *Two Rivers Times*. The plan includes commercial space and residential homes, and among other concerns it raised one about Calico's fate, which the article references: "...It's vaguely mentioned as 'a sign designated as a historic landmark by Middletown Township.'" The *Times* said there were provisions for Calico to be "maintained or relocated on the side without increases to area or height." So it looks like Calico is safe from destruction, but whether he continues to loom over Route 35 or is relegated to somewhere further back on the property remains to be seen. —Thanks to Erik Weber



CLOSING IN CLIFTON—JOHNNY'S: Johnny's Bar and Grill has been a fixture in Clifton's Botany Village since 1953, according to NorthJersey.com. In July, they spoke to the Penkalski family, who owned Johnny's the entire time and decided to make a final last call on the place in August, ending an era. Johnny Penkalski said he had a buyer for the property, and that he and his mother are headed to Toms River. His mother, Emily, tended bar and cooked all those years—and even served as a bouncer. But she recently broke her hip in a fall, putting her out of commission, though she and her son said it's not a factor in their decision. It was simply time. As Emily told NorthJersey.com, "I'm 96, how much longer can I tend bar?"

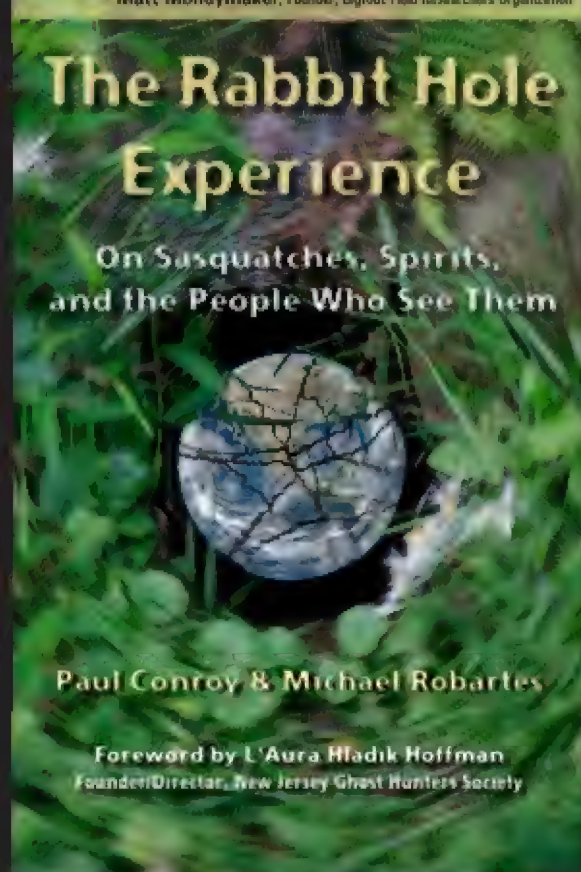
MOVING THE BAYVILLE DINOSAUR: The platform off of Route 9 in Berkeley that held the Bayville Dinosaur is empty, as jerseyshoreonline.com reported in July 2018. The body of everyone's favorite roadside dinosaur was temporarily moved to a safe, off-road location while it's being restored, which includes joining it to a spiffy new head. Moving the dino's body required a boom truck, provided by a local welding company. For updates on the restoration progress,

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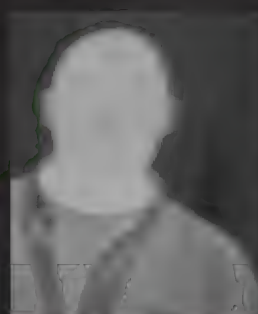


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Paul Conroy conducts investigations for the Bigfoot Field Researchers Organization (BFRO). He has studied the Sasquatch phenomenon from the Everglades to the Canadian border for thirteen years. When not pursuing the unknown, he roams the wilds, practices martial arts, reads, and writes. Conroy and his furry four-legged daughter Koda live in the Jersey swamp.



Michael Robartes leads Scientific Paranormal, a paranormal investigation team in The Atlantic Paranormal Society (TAPS) Family network. A lifelong explorer of unexplained phenomena, he knows what eyewitnesses go through and helps them integrate their experiences into their worldview. Robartes lives in New York State.

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visit the Restore the Bayville Dinosaur Facebook page.

DEAD BIRDS BAGGED IN JERSEY CITY: Bags of headless dead birds continue to show up around the Garden State. The latest find was in July, in Jersey City, according to NJ.com. Department of Public Works employees found five garbage bags, each containing "about 20 dead chickens, pigeons, or blackbirds" on Kennedy Boulevard. The birds did not have any other visible injuries. A Humane Society representative told NJ.com that "This was a deliberate and ritualistic act." — Thanks to Melissa "OCDC 1980s" Franco

HEADLESS GOAT FOUND IN ELMWOOD PARK: Someone is branching out in the headless-animals-left-in-containers business. In April 2018, NJ.com reported that authorities were investigating how the carcass of a headless goat turned up on railroad tracks located in Elmwood Park. The goat had been left in a 27-gallon plastic tote, which was removed by the Bergen County Prosecutor's

Office SPCA for further investigation.

SPECIAL DELIVERY, TROOPER DIVISION: This is an interesting and very rare way to get out of a ticket. In June, a New Jersey state trooper pulled over a driver for a routine traffic stop. The two got to talking, and it turns out the driver was a retired police officer from Piscataway—the same town the trooper was from. More talk, and a revelation that the trooper grew up on a street where the retired cop, as a rookie, had delivered a baby back in 1991—a baby who would be named Michael. The trooper's first name was Michael, he had been born in his house on that street, and he realized that this man he'd just pulled over was the officer who helped deliver him. And no, he did not give him a ticket. They forgot to get a photo of the event. But they met up again later to do just that. Note: This story was covered by multiple news outlets but our summary is primarily from a *Washington Post* article.

PADDLING ACROSS THE HUDSON: Even under the best conditions, the Hudson River isn't the safest place for a person to set out on a paddle board with the intent of crossing from New Jersey into Manhattan. But that didn't stop one guy—dressed in a suit and carrying a briefcase—from making an attempt in June 2018. Turns out he's an amateur comedian from Jersey City (via Belleville and North Arlington), who told the *Hoboken Patch* that he was late to a meeting with an agent and decided to paddle board across the river instead of taking the ferry. Right. If he meant to get some attention for his transit choices, he did: at least one ferry passenger made a video of his efforts. And he also attracted the attention of a police officer and a

NY Waterway worker, the latter of whom, he told the *Patch*, asked him if he was "...trying to f***** die out here?" Nope, he wasn't. Just trying to make it to his meeting, which he did, though he didn't get agent representation.



UNION HOTEL HONORED FOR HISTORIC ROLE: In June 2018, the New Jersey chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) added Flemington's Union Hotel to their registry of national historic sites in journalism. SPJ New Jersey noted the designation with a plaque presented to the Hunterdon County Historical Society at the end of June, as announced in a promotional email. The email also indicated that the Historical Society would hold the plaque "until the future of the Union Hotel is resolved." The hotel was hub to press covering Lindbergh baby kidnapping/murder trial in 1935 and of late has been under threat of demolition due to a redevelopment plan that we last reported on in Issue #46. *Weird NJ* has covered the hotel's trial roots as well as some of its more haunted history over the years, and we're

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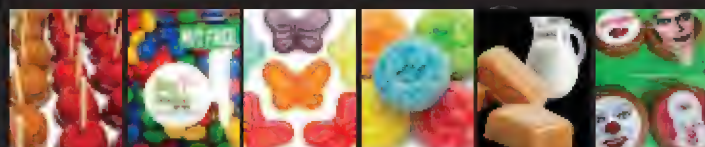
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ent for another New Jersey school district, according to NJ.com, and was also planning to sue the Holmdel police because his actions were "low-level municipal offenses" that didn't merit the mugshot they took of him. Maybe so, but overall most definitely a series of unfortunate bowel movements.

FREDON'S FROZEN FLAVORS OF TAY-HAM:

Windy Brow Farms created a social media stir earlier in 2018 when it announced a new ice cream flavor to the world—one that includes Taylor Ham brand pork roll as an ingredient. The flavor is one of the "only in Jersey" ice creams on their menu, and it set off controversy on two fronts. The first, because it's ice cream flavored with meat, though tiny bits that have been caramelized and therefore, are rather sweet when combined with the maple syrup-y French toast that also comprises the confection. The second because Windy Brow showed their true Northern New Jersey roots in using "Taylor Ham" in the name, which set off the state's pork roll contingent into a nomenclature frenzy, including at least one guy who created a petition to change the name of the flavor. Their ire was returned by those who are loyal to earlier generations who started the "Taylor" trend that endures to this day. It's an age-old argument that can only happen in New Jersey. Anyway, you should be able to get a taste of the unique treat through at least fall 2018!

ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL UPDATE: *Weird NJ* reader Gerry Trabalka shared a CentralJersey.com article updating us on the status of Roosevelt Hospital, which we've featured numerous times in past issues, most recently in Issue #47. Long story short: "the historic Roosevelt Care Center" is being transformed "into the Residence at Roosevelt Park, which provides an 84-unit affordable, independent senior housing complex overlooking the county's Roosevelt Park." There was a grand re-opening of the building on April 11, 2018, and it looks like it has come a long way from 1937, when it was "constructed as a tuberculosis hospital... and was built as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal." Gerry wonders "How many paranormal events the residents are gonna witness when this place is going to be in full operation?" That remains to be seen, but we're glad the building has been repurposed and not razed like so many other historic buildings in the state.

EMPTY LEGENDS IN VERNON: The *New Jersey Herald* reported at the end of April 2018 that the families who had been living in Vernon's Legends hotel left prior to officials coming to evict them from the property. A sweep done of the hotel revealed nobody was still living on the premises, though it wasn't known if everyone had officially settled safely into shelters elsewhere; something representatives from social services agencies in the county were present to assist on during the sweep. The *Herald* reported that "The outcome represents what is believed to be an end to a saga that began almost from the moment [Vernon's current mayor] took office more than two years ago and began ramping up pressure on long-term residents to leave because of what he said were unsafe living conditions and the fact that the facility was never approved for long-term rentals." The article also reported that plans for what Legends might become are being discussed, with township officials looking for investors. One possibility is an assisted living facility, which is about as far as one can get from the location's glory days as a Playboy Club.

FABLES TO OPEN IN FAIRY TALE FOREST: If you're looking for a chance to check out part of Fairy Tale Forest in Oak Ridge without trespass-



ing—and get a bite to eat at the same time—you're in luck. A new restaurant is opening at the location, to be called Fables. Chef Christine Nunn told *NorthJersey.com* that it will be a "family-friendly" establishment, housed in the park's restaurant/gift shop. She said it will be "casual during the day with burgers, bowls, crepes and homemade ice

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cream desserts and such" with a more formal, but still fun, dinner menu. We last featured Fairy Tale Forest in Issue #44 when we interviewed Christine Vander Ploeg, granddaughter of Fairy Tale Forest creator Paul Woehle, who was working to restore the park to its former glory. We're glad to see this new chance for it to live happily ever after. — Thanks to Ken Montayne

BROWNS MILLS BIGFOOT? We know Old Red Eye calls the Northwestern part of the state home, but has he made his way down to the Pine Barrens? In May, *Coast to Coast AM* reported on a possible Bigfoot sighting in Browns Mills, as shared by the Bigfoot Field Research Organization (BFRO). The sighting occurred in April, when a couple were walking their dog in the area. They smelled it first, reporting the classic "strange, musky odor" that accompanies many Bigfoot sightings. The stench alone was disturbing enough to make them leave, and after driving off, the woman told BFRO she saw "something brown on two legs and about six feet tall sprint behind the car." The couple reversed their vehicle to find out what it was, but only heard something crashing through the brush. *Coast to Coast AM* said the couple soon returned with a BFRO investigator, but didn't find further evidence of their encounter.

IT'S KINETIC AT THE MORRIS MUSEUM: There's a new exhibition series at the Morris Museum called *A Cache of Kinetic Art*. According to the museum, "It features the energy and vitality of kineticism, while exploring stimulating artistic displays that express the originality and resourcefulness of present-day artisans, using traditional and contemporary media." The first in the series, *Curious Characters*, closed in July 2018, but the second, entitled *Simply Steampunk*, will run from March to July 2019. We featured the museum's permanent Murtoth D. Guinness Collection of historic mechanical musical instruments and automata (mechanical figures) in Issue #38. You can find out more about the series at their website: <https://morrismuseum.org/>.

AS THE URN TURNS IN OCEAN COUNTY: A man walking his dog in an Ocean County's Berkeley Island Park last March found a gold urn of the sort you keep cremains in. He brought it home, and his wife posted a picture of it on Facebook, which in turn resulted in an article on NJ.com. Cue the jokes about people losing loved ones over the edge of

boats while attempting to spread their ashes at sea, though some pointed out that it could have been lost during Superstorm Sandy. A few days later, another woman saw the story online and thought it might be the urn containing the ashes of her dog, Blue Boy, which had been stolen in a robbery 26 years ago. She reached out to the urn's finders to confirm some details about it and hoped that it really was her dog's. If so, nobody knows where the urn has been all this time or why it showed up on the beach when it did. —Thanks to Melissa "OCDG 1980s" Franco and Thomas Pluck

SOUTH JERSEY UFO FLAP? There were numerous UFO sightings in South Jersey late in 2017 and earlier this year, as reported in the *Asbury Park Press* last April. The story led with a March 17 sighting in which they interviewed the person who experienced it, but it also highlighted other sightings as reported by the Mutual Unidentified Flying Object Network (MUFON) or the National UFO Reporting Center, as well reported on increased interest in UFOs overall since related stories/editorials were published in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and the Defense Department declassified videos showing what could be UFO encounters with Air Force pilots. Here is the list of sightings that appear in the article for your reference:

- Dec. 28: Tinton Falls. Report of "a rapidly falling white-blue light." (National UFO Reporting Center).
 - Jan. 10: Tinton Falls. Report of "a black, oval-shaped craft." (National UFO Reporting Center).
 - Feb. 26: Jackson. "A person reported seeing a 40-foot-long, disk-like craft with rows of red and white alternating lights hovering over the trees." (National UFO Reporting Center).
 - March 14: Egg Harbor Township. Report similar to the March 17 sighting. (MUFON)
 - March 17: A man saw "three lights in a triangular pattern "moving very slowly" across the sky" in Wall Township. He got photos of the lights, which are visible but hard to see. According to the *Press*, the photos were shared with the Air Force at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, but it can't identify what appears in them.
 - March 22: North Brunswick. Report similar to the March 17 sighting. (MUFON)
- The article quoted MUFON as reporting there were six other UFO sightings around New Jersey in March 2018 in addition to those listed above.

MASS SHOOTING COINCIDENCE: One of New Jersey's not-so-proud "firsts" is that we're home to one of the United States' first killing spree mass murders. On Sept 6, 1949, Howard Unruh, a deranged but decorated World War II veteran, loaded himself up with ammunition and a German luger and with a dazed look, walked down River

Street in the Cramer Hill section of Camden. He opened fire on some intended victims plus a few other people who got in his way. His 20-minute rampage killed 13 people and wounded 3 others,



and became known in the media as "The Walk Of Death." One of the survivors of Unruh's spree was 12-year old Charles Cohen, whose mother, Rose, hid him in a closet (she was one of Unruh's victims). Years later, on February 14, 2018, Charles's granddaughter would become the survivor of another mass shooter, as a student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. As she wrote in a Twitter post: "This is my grandpa. When he was 12 years old, he hid in a closet while his family was murdered during the first mass shooting in America. Almost 70 years later, I also hid in a closet from a murderer. These events shouldn't be repetitive. Something has to change."

TRENTON CLEARS CROWS: In February, NJ.com reported on Trenton's crow troubles. Around 30,000 of the birds were roosting in the city over the winter, making a mess (imagine just a fraction of them roosting over your car) as well keeping people awake. Trenton got a little help from the United States Department of Agriculture, which over four consecutive nights used a full bag of bird-detering tricks, including "pyrotechnics, lasers, spotlights, amplified recordings of crow distress calls and crow effigies" in an attempt to scare away the birds. Hopefully it worked as well as the USDA says it has in other urban areas.

GRAVE TRAPPINGS IN HANOVER: You think you have workplace hazards? Think of those who work in cemeteries, and we're not talking about dealing with made up stuff like zombies or real annoyances like grave robbers or vandals. Here's an example to explain our point, from February 2018, at the Hanover Cemetery in Morris County. A cemetery worker was digging a grave when "an 800-pound vault cover fell on top of him, pinning him in the open grave." The *Daily Record* reported emergency workers had to rescue him "by digging out the vault cover then manually lifting the cover out of the grave." The worker experienced chest injuries. —Thanks to Dave Vasa

PLAYING WITH FIRE IN AC: The next time you visit Atlantic City, you might want to think about who is setting up shop next to your hotel room. According to a story published on whhy.org, in February 2018 police "charged a New Jersey man with setting up a methamphetamine lab in an Atlantic City casino hotel room that caught fire... causing four floors to be evacuated." Luckily, there was just damage to the room in which the fire occurred, on the 44th floor of the Tropicana Casino and Resort's west tower. The fire injured the man and a hotel employee. Why.org reported that video footage captured "individuals fleeing the room and hotel before the arrival of security and first responders." Police charged the man "with maintaining a drug production facility, possession of methamphetamine, and criminal mischief." —Thanks to Jesse P. Pollock

WEIRD FRINGE

WILKES BARRE GHOST HUNTER BUSTED: In June, *The Citizens' Voice* reported that police arrested a man who tried to enter the "infamous Welles House" in the city, which is alleged to be haunted on a scale akin to the Amityville Horror. It's probably not the first time anyone has ever been caught trying to hunt ghosts on the property, but when police found this man, according to the *Voice*, he was "holding a pry bar in his left hand, with a 24-inch sword tied to his back" and he was "also wearing red gloves, despite the warm weather." And unlike most paranormal investigators, who carry digital recorders, temperature gauges, and EMF meters, he was carrying "a shotgun...brass knuckles, a pocket knife and a copy of the Bible..." He claimed to know people who knew the property owners, but that wasn't enough to avoid being charged "with defiant trespassing, possessing instruments of a crime, weapons possession, possessing an offensive weapon and prowling at night time." He was also arraigned later that same day, with bail set at \$25,000.



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THE DEEP CUT GARDEN OF VITO GENOVESE BEFORE BRUCE THERE WAS BUT ONE "BOSS" IN MONMOUTH COUNTY



It's not often that you get the chance for a self-guided tour around the grounds and garden of a real-life Mafia kingpin...and live to tell about it. But we're fortunate enough here in New Jersey, "The Garden State," to have access to stroll the property of not just any Godfather, but the Don of Dons, the "Boss of all Bosses"—Vito Genovese.

It shouldn't come as a shock to anyone reading these pages to know that the Mafia, or "organized crime," has some very deep roots in the Garden State. And perhaps coincidentally, gardens have often played an iconic role in the mythology of Cosa Nostra characters, both real and fictional. Who could forget Marlon Brando's portrayal of Vito Corleone playfully chasing his young grandson Michael through the family's vegetable garden, then clutching his chest and keeling over dead in the tomato patch?

Here in New Jersey we have our own Godfathers and garden imagery. In one episode of HBO's series *The Sopranos*, Tony sinks into a severe depression and has hallucinations of a beautiful Italian woman named Isabella in his neighbor's suburban Essex County garden. Tony sees Isabella several times during the episode, and later learns that she never existed. And then there's the scene of Tony wandering among the ornate garden statuary at the now defunct Fountains of Wayne store on Route 46.

In Issue #43 of *Weird NJ* we explored the similarities between the character of Tony Soprano and the real-life Godfather that he was largely based upon—Richie "the Boot" Boiardo. While Boiardo insisted he was nothing more than a simple man who enjoyed puttering in his beloved vegetable garden on his Livingston, NJ estate, in reality the secretive Don was a high-powered Capo of the Genovese crime family, controlling many of its racketeering endeavors throughout North Jersey right up until the day he died in 1984 at the age of 93.

Although the Boot never saw the 1972 release of *The Godfather*, he appreciated the similarities between the character of Vito Corleone and himself, so much so that he hung a sign in his beloved garden that read, "The Godfather Garden." Roger Hanos, one of Boiardo's grandsons who grew up on the Boot's Livingston estate, even co-authored a book about his notorious grand-

father in 2013 entitled, *In the Godfather Garden*. In a 2014 *Weird NJ* article about Boiardo we asked Roger to describe the "Godfather Garden" for us.

"Well, my grandfather just got out of prison in '71 or '72. I believe it was gambling conspiracy. Family and friends saw the movie (*The Godfather*) and said, 'Gee, there's a lot of correlation here.' Even the property looks very similar. The Corleone compound is, aesthetically, very similar. I gotta tell you, my grandfather's property was much more elaborate. So was the home."

And while "Diamond Richie" Boiardo, as the FBI referred to him, was a prosperous and powerful figure in New Jersey's crime syndicate, he was merely one of several "Capos" or underbosses, who all answered to one man: Vito Genovese, the "Boss of All Bosses." And not surprisingly, this Don had his own magnificent garden, and it's located right in Monmouth County, NJ!

Vito "Don Vitone" Genovese was an Italian-American mobster who rose to power during Prohibition as an enforcer in the American Mafia. A long-time associate and childhood friend of Charles "Lucky" Luciano, Genovese helped shape the rise of the Mafia and organized crime in the United States. He would later lead Luciano's crime family, which was renamed the Genovese crime family by the authorities.

He was known as Boss of all Bosses and ruled one of the wealthiest, most dangerous, and most powerful criminal organizations in the world and maintained power and influence over other crime families in America. Along with Luciano he is credited with expanding the heroin trade to an international level.

Born in 1897 near Naples, Italy, Genovese was a man of modest height standing just at 5' 7". But his small stature didn't keep him from becoming a violent and ruthless killer. According to mobster-turned-informant Joseph Valachi, Genovese was a murderer with his own set of rules: "If you went to Vito and told him about some guy who was doing wrong, he would have this guy killed and then he would have you killed for telling on the guy."

When Genovese was 15, his family immigrated to the United States and took up residence in Little Italy, Manhattan. Genovese started his criminal career stealing merchandise from pushcart vendors and running errands for mobsters. He later collected money from people who played "the numbers," illegal lotteries. One of Genovese's early friends was "Lucky" Luciano, later a major leader of the Cosa Nostra.

In the early 1920s, Genovese started working for Giuseppe "Joe the Boss" Masseria, the boss of a powerful Manhattan gang. Involved in bootlegging and extortion, Genovese's main value to Masseria was his propensity for violence. Genovese worked his way up through the ranks of the Mafia mostly by conspiring with Luciano to orchestrate the bloody executions of a succession of their Bosses; first Masseria, then Salvatore Maranzano.

In 1931, Genovese's first wife died of tuberculosis and he quickly announced his intention to marry Anna Petillo. The only sticking point was that she was already married to another man, Gerard Vernotico. But that didn't stand in the way of the soon to be happy couple. On March 16, 1932, Gerard Vernotico was found strangled to death on a Manhattan rooftop. Twelve days later Genovese married Gerard's widow, Anna, who was also Genovese's cousin.

In 1935 Vito Genovese purchased a 35-acre tract of land in rural Middletown, NJ where he planned to create a lavish retreat from New York City for his himself and his wife Anna. The property, which is known today as Deep Cut Park, was purchased from Edward and Teresa R. Dangler, who had constructed a large two-story Colonial Revival mansion on the hilltop of the estate. Genovese set about re-fashioning the grounds into a pseudo-Italian style reminiscent of Naples, Italy, where he was born. Caruso Construction Company of Atlantic Highlands carried out the construction and Lovett's Nursery of Little Silver planted the gardens according to the plans of landscape architect Theodore Stout.

Stout wanted to create a garden that would be "big enough to make an impression from the top of the hill," and was given free reign in the design. Genovese's only requirement was the Mount Vesuvius rockery, a conical stone structure fashioned to resemble the famously destructive volcano of Vito's homeland. Since the Colonial Revival mansion did not lend itself to an Italian garden, the Stout's design was a mixture of English and Italian styles. Features included a pseudo-Italian rock garden on the steep slope below the house, terraced gardens at the foot of the hill, a large recessed rectangular garden area surrounded by a low stone wall, and a masonry Pergola, all of which still exist today.

In June 1936, "Lucky" Luciano was sentenced to 30 to 50 years in state prison as a result of a conviction on pandering. With Luciano's imprisonment, Genovese became acting boss of the Luciano crime family. This put him squarely in the crosshairs of Thomas Dewey, the New York City prosecutor and district attorney who was relentless in his effort to curb the power of the American Mafia. He successfully prosecuted Luciano and convicted Waxey Gordon, another prominent New York City gangster and bootlegger, on charges of tax evasion. Dewey almost succeeded in apprehending Jewish mobster Dutch Schultz as well, but Schultz





was gunned down in Newark's Palace Chophouse in 1935 in a hit ordered by Luciano and his associates. To evade prosecution, Genovese moved out of Dewey's jurisdiction to the sprawling estate in Middletown.

In 1937, Ernesto "The Hawk" Rupolo copped to murdering Ferdinand "the Shadow" Boccia on orders from Genovese. Fearing prosecution for murder, Genovese fled to Italy in 1937 with \$750,000 cash and settled in the city of Nola, near Naples. Upon Genovese's departure, Frank Costello became acting boss of the Luciano family. Shortly after Genovese's flight a mysterious and suspicious fire destroyed his Middletown mansion and the grounds and garden fell into a long period of disrepair.

Genovese prospered in Italy, becoming a prominent Mafia leader there and ingratiating himself with dictator Benito Mussolini. Genovese gave nearly \$4 million in donations to Mussolini's fascist party by the end of World War II. Il Duce even knighted Genovese, bestowing the rank of Commendatore upon the mobster. When the Allies invaded Italy in September 1943, Genovese switched sides again and quickly offered his services to the U.S. Army as a translator and spy. Both were simply covers for his real occupation though, a black marketeer. Genovese was appointed to a position of interpreter/liaison officer in the U.S. Army headquarters in Naples and quickly became one of the Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories' most trusted employees. The Army seemed completely unaware of his prior history.

On August 27, 1944, U.S. military police arrested Genovese in Italy during an investigation into his running of a black market ring. It was revealed that Genovese had been stealing trucks, flour and sugar from the Army. He was sent back New York to stand trial for the murder Boccia in 1936.

Upon arrival in New York, Genovese was arraigned on murder charges and pled not guilty. On June 10, 1946, the prosecution's star witness, Jerry Esposito, was found shot to death beside a road in Norwood, NJ. Earlier, another witness, Peter LaTempa, was found dead in a cell where he had been

held in protective custody. Without anyone to corroborate Rupolo's testimony, the government's case collapsed, and the charges against Genovese were dismissed. In making his decision, the judge commented:

"I cannot speak for the jury, but I believe that if there were even a shred of corroborating evidence, you would have been condemned to the chair."

Released from custody, Genovese moved his family into a modest home in Atlantic Highlands, NJ, and began taking back control of Luciano's old family from then-boss Frank Costello. Costello, however, had no intention of returning power over the family to him and appointed Genovese as a new under-





boss.

While on the lam in Italy Genovese had tasked mobster Steven Franse with supervising his wife Anna. In December 1952, Anna Genovese did something unthinkable for a Mafia wife when she sued her husband for divorce and financial support. She had moved out of the family home two years earlier. Genovese blamed it all on Franse and in 1953, outraged over Anna's love affairs and her lawsuit against him, Genovese allegedly ordered Franse's murder. Two hitmen brutally beat Franse and then slowly strangled him.

In 1957 Genovese decided to move against Costello and ordered a button be pushed on him. Vincent "the Chin" Gigante was dispatched to perform the hit and shot Costello once in the head, then left the scene. Fortunately for Costello, he suffered only a superficial scalp wound. However, the experience convinced Costello to retire from the family. Genovese now became the undisputed boss of what became known as the Genovese crime family.

On July 7, 1958, Genovese was indicted on charges of conspiring to import and sell narcotics. He was convicted of selling a large quantity of heroin in 1959. He was sentenced to 15 years in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia. Before he went to prison, Genovese created a ruling panel of high-level family members to supervise the family. Genovese still retained ultimate control from prison, however.

From his jail cell Genovese continued to order hits on rival mobsters whom he perceived as a threat, and others who he felt had a hand in his conviction. He wielded power over his crime family from prison for the next decade, right up until he died from a heart attack on February 14, 1969 at the United States Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in Springfield, Missouri. His funeral was a sparsely attended affair, which began at William S. Anderson Funeral Home in Red Bank, NJ, where he





was laid out in a bronze coffin. His body was then transported to St. Agnes Roman Catholic Church in Atlantic Highlands for the funeral Mass. Genovese was buried at St. John's Cemetery in Middle Village, Queens, NY.

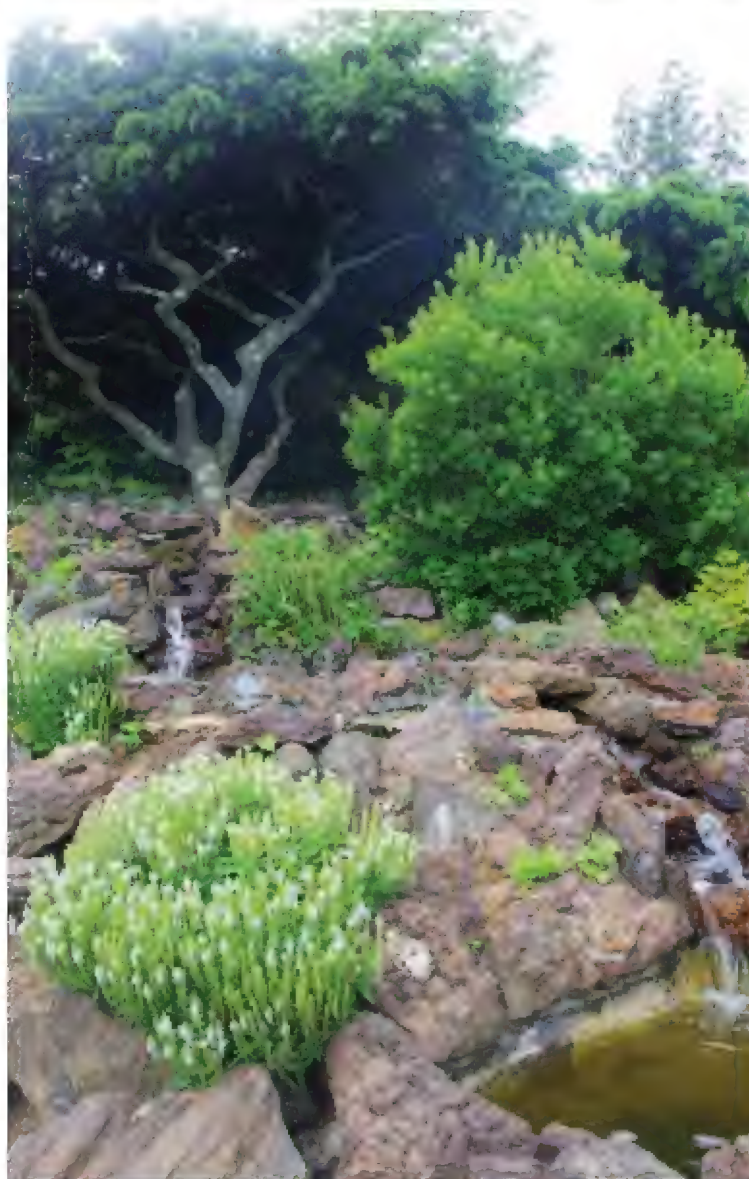
Genovese's Middletown property was sold in 1948 to a man named Dominic Caruso. In 1953 Karl and Marjorie Sperry Wihtol purchased "Deep Cut Farm" and built a new house to replace the one that had burned down. Their former home is now used as the park's visitors' center and horticultural education facility. The Wihtols renovated the greenhouse and worked on the gardens. Karl Wihtol died in 1970, and Marjorie resided at Deep Cut Farm until 1977. In her last will and testament, she donated half the property to the Monmouth County Park System, to "be used for park and horticultural purposes only." The Park System purchased the rest of the property with New Jersey Green Acres funds.

Monmouth County took the title of the 39-acre Deep Cut Farm in 1977. The park was dedicated September 14, 1978 as a facility devoted to the education and enjoyment of the home gardener. The Monmouth County Park System has since added more acreage to the park, which now consists of a total of 54 acres.

Strolling around Deep Cut Park today, with its meandering stone-lined paths and lush manicured gardens, it is not hard to imagine just how Vito Genovese himself felt about the property so many years ago. In fact, aside from the house, the grounds look very much as they did back then. Small streams of water cascade down the terraced hillside, tumbling from one tranquil pond to the next. The tangled trunks and branches of Sargent's weeping hemlocks create shady, tunnel-like umbrellas. Large, brightly colored koi glide lazily beneath flowering water lilies in an artificial pond. A long stone walkway leads further down the expansive sloping lawn toward the enormous recessed Rose Parterre, where a combination of rose bushes and boxwoods form geometric ground patterns across the vast walled-in garden. At the far end is the Pergola, an open-roofed, arbor-like structure, which is the focal point of the garden.

These days Deep Cut Garden and the Pergola are a popular place for local newlyweds to have their wedding photos taken. The happy couples pose with wide smiling faces, flushed with all the optimism in the world and surrounded by the natural beauty of Vito Genovese's carefully planned garden in full bloom. Few seem to know, or perhaps care, that this enchanting flowery setting is really the bitter fruits born of extortion, prostitution, illegal narcotics and gambling, racketeering and murder.

Deep Cut Gardens is located at 152 Red Hill Rd, Middletown, NJ. Park opens at 8:00 AM and closes at dusk daily, year round.



SEARCHING FOR

THE GREY MAN

For many years my interest in the unusual culminated with an almost slave-like devotion to true crime, from local mob haunts to abandoned prisons. My forte, however, was in reading up and discovering all I could pertaining to serial killers, an interest which has earned me a fair share of odd looks and outright threats. I would just like to intercede that I in no way condone, glorify or praise any of the actions perpetrated by these individuals, and my interest simply comes from a place of (morbid) curiosity and knowledge.

My keen interest is and was to uncover any and all information regarding late 19th, early 20th century killers (such as HH Holmes and Carl Panzram) who have been lost or brushed over with the passing of time. My studies, however, were shaken to the core when I first learned about Albert Fish, the infamous Grey Man. Fish led a life of perversity and depravity, culminating in some of the most wretched crimes perpetrated on children. Child murderer, rapist, cannibal, sadist, masochist. A chronicling of his life reads almost as a case of horror writer one-upmanship, to see who could top each passing deed with something even more tasteless. Over time, every other case I studied somehow never seemed to be able to top Fish in terms of wedging itself in my mind, and pure horror. But like a moth to a flame, I spent time in gathering information, books and even photographs concerning his crimes and eventual capture. This leads me to the story at hand.

On June 3rd of this year, I hosted a "recollection tour" in the NY area relating to various crimes from the early 20th century. Included among the stops were two key places: Wisteria Cottage and Albert Fish's final resting place. The date has meaning as well, for to the day, exactly 90 years before was the day Albert Fish took 10-year-old Grace Budd up to the abandoned house and killed her. This murder is significant, as it led to a six-year manhunt that finally culminated in the capture of Fish by the ever tenacious Detective William F. King. The house stood abandoned for years, and Fish lived in a shack not too far from it back in the day, so he knew of the secluded and abandoned state of the property. When he was arrested and returned to the scene of the crime, they located Grace's skull, bones, a cleaver and hacksaw. They never did discover the knife Fish used, however. Since then, the house passed through various owners and is, to this day, still occupied and renovated. We entered via a neighboring property (with permission) that was up for sale in order to take photographs from afar comparing

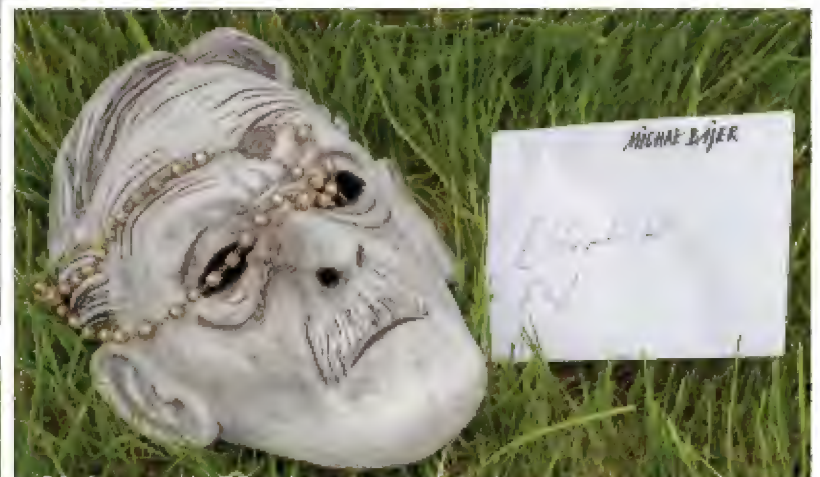


PHOTOS BY NICHOLAS TURCO





This murder is significant, as it led to a six-year manhunt that finally culminated in the capture of Fish by the ever tenacious Detective William F. King. The house stood abandoned for years, and Albert Fish lived in a shack not too far from it back in the day, so he knew of the secluded and abandoned state of the property. When he was arrested and returned to the scene of the crime, they located Grace's skull, bones, a cleaver and hacksaw.



This mask of Albert Fish is a piece of art made by Seregor of Carach Angren from the Netherlands. It's a curio I own.



I find it curious as to how many people pass by completely unaware that this small grassy patch hosts his remains.

I plan to have further such tours along the country in the upcoming months in various other states. Not all of them are related to serial killers—a lot have to do with mafia/crime in general. It's a passion project of mine, and many people share this interest as well. I go to each place with as much permission and legality as possible (I do not break the law if I cannot see a property or access it), and without causing a scene/ruckus/vandalization. -Michał Bajer



THE GARBAGELANDS

GARBAGE TALES OF THE GARDEN STATE

I have been a collector of New Jersey garbage for many years. My house is furnished with garbage collected since my early teens. I would methodically search the clean-up week bulletins and gather information on various county "clean-up weeks" in search of treasures I knew were out there and free for the picking.

My first encounter with garbology happened when I was 10, and my mom and I were driving back from the Dairy Queen in Bayville. Pulling over to the side of the road, my mom snagged a beautiful, big old Schwinn bicycle, complete with the front fender skirts, a headlight, and basket still attached. She loved it. I, on the other hand, was mortified that my mother was picking through the garbage, and slouched as low as I could in the front seat to avoid being seen by my peers. Little did I know that scene would replay in my thoughts for years to come.

About the time I was 14, my friends and I were walking through the town of Montclair, and piled outside a stately residence were dozens of boxes filled with "stuff." There were books from the early part of the century, photos, notebooks, scrapbooks, a top hat and even one of those iron mannequins that are always pictured in the background of cluttered attics. Man, this was great! We could see that most of this stuff was the property of a Mr. McFetters, whose name was on most of the books and certificates. It was really interesting to see this guy's life story piled out on the curb to be carted off to the dumps. There was even a huge wooden trunk with a rounded top. It was unbelievable. We carried all this stuff home on our backs: four miles at least. This was my first brush with local history and cool garbage.

When I got my license, I thought the world was my garbage! No

longer restricted to my neighborhood, we would hit the garbage pick-ups every night of the week. It got so bad that when we'd see a "prime load," we would fight each other and jump out of the car before it stopped. I soon learned it was better to be co-pilot on garbage runs.

Treasure in the garbage? You bet! Throughout my years as a garbologist, I've come across many fine pieces of furniture that I have stripped down and refinished. I've always gone for the oak wood, personally. I've found oriental rugs, bookcases (with glass) and even an autograph of Teddy Roosevelt. The exciting part of garbage picking is you'll never know what's around the next bend.

A.J. Webberman, who was a garbologist in the truest form, would rifle through celebrities' garbage and analyze what they threw out. When I go through garbage, I wonder what makes someone trash a kidney-shaped coffee table or a first-edition book. Maybe they don't see the value in it, maybe they want to change their lives by throwing out their past, or maybe they're just dead.

I've become very selective at garbage hauls these days. My life is cluttered with garbage of the past. My friends keep asking me when the garage sale is. I tell them maybe next month. Maybe I'll just put it all back to the curb from whence it came, and watch from the window how many kids duck down when their mother stops the car and hauls away her new-found treasure.

So what do New Jerseyans throw away and what do they find? Here's a sample of some of the answers we've received, and believe me, they're not pretty. -Mark Sceurman



Alien Autopsy In Mullica Hill

This is a picture I took of someone's trash near Mullica Hill. The sign says "Area 51 Alien Autopsy" and gives the steps of doing the procedure. I thought it was quite odd, and I happened to have my camera with me.

-Danielle Wynne

Tales Of Junk In Netcong

In Netcong on Maple Avenue was the infamous "Junkman." The Junkman would roam the street on garbage night, searching for anything that wasn't pure garbage: tires, TVs and radios, old laundry baskets, empty boxes and furniture. You name it, he collected it.

I woke up one morning at 2:00 AM and heard a noise outside. It was the Junkman going through my garbage! The local residents signed a petition against him, and the Board of Health forced him to clean up his yard, where he kept all his findings. By then it contained three broken-down cars and a pile of cardboard boxes about 20 feet high. Also scattered about were bricks, old chairs, an old couch, pots and pans and countless other items—a true potpourri of junk.

So, the Junkman cleaned up his yard, but nothing was thrown out! Everything was moved inside! Since the Junkman was a renter, the owner decided to sell the house to get him out. He moved out—but left his treasure behind.

There was no way he could take it with him, since the entire house was filled from top to bottom. The rooms and basement had paths running through them, with junk piled from floor to ceiling. The front porch was also piled high with junk.

The real and final kicker was when the house had to be cleaned out before the new owner could move in. It took two large dumpsters and a garbage truck to empty the house. I remember watching in awe as a crew of men carted stuff out in trash cans and threw junk out of the second-floor windows into the dumpsters. When I thought they were done, a third dumpster was put in the backyard—the garage was also packed with junk! The clean-up took three full days to complete. The disbelieving looks on the workers' faces were priceless.

The house is now beautiful; extensive work was done inside and out. How do I know all this? I am the next-door neighbor!

The Junkman now drives a station wagon full of old newspapers and—you guessed it—other junk. He's no youngster: he is well into his 80s. So, if you see an old station wagon filled with junk being driven by a white-haired old man, it could be the Junkman!

Wobbles Stole My Garbage!

Netcong is a small, quiet town, about one square mile. Not much happens here—there is a lot of traffic and a QuickChek on Main Street where you can see a lot of strange people.

This is where you can see a little man called "Wobbles." I don't know how he got that name, unless it's because he sort of sways when he walks. In the summer, he walks around in a cut-off t-shirt, really showing off his hunched back. He's not a trouble-maker, but he was responsible for making my garbage disappear.

Let me explain. Thursday is trash collection day. As I was leaving for work, my garbage cans were empty, and right in front of my door! All the other houses on the street still had their garbage waiting to be picked up, but mine was gone! This freaked me out—who was stealing my garbage? And why—identity theft? I reported it to the police.

The mystery was solved when I spotted Wobbles "helping" the trash collectors by consolidating garbage, making large piles of garbage instead of several small ones. He would take the garbage out of my cans and put it with a neighbor's to make one less stop for the trash collectors. It was a good thought, but seeing those empty trash cans with no explanation was quite creepy. I guess he got tired of "helping"—after a few months, no more empty garbage cans.

I saw him myself as I was going into the infamous QuickChek of Netcong, in the weirdest part of town. I had to do a double-take when I saw him, because I really did believe that he was gone. Anyhow, this growing legend of weirdness continues! -Al Osusky

The Old Woman Of Allamuchy

About 12 years ago, a guy I worked with asked me to help him move a washing machine, so I agreed. We went to a house near Allamuchy. A disheveled old woman about 90 years old answered the door, clutching an open can of beer. When we entered the house I noticed an awful smell, and that there were many years' worth of refuse of all kinds piled everywhere: garbage, newspapers, discarded mail and women's handbags sitting on tables and what was left of the furniture. There were traces of all kinds of vermin everywhere: rats, bugs, etc.

I helped move the washing machine and left soon after. My pal called me again to ask if I could help move a refrigerator in the same house. I reluctantly agreed. The house was just as filthy, and we were directed to the cellar. The cellar was a nightmare (the old woman had heard that the electric company was offering a rebate for old refrigerators). There were two refrigerators that, when opened, were solid blocks of ice inside. The basement was lined with shelves containing hundreds of canning jars with pickled vegetables of all kinds—many had gone rotten, and the jars and lids had burst. There were dozens of bottles of moonshine liquor on one shelf.

After we moved the fridge, we started a fire in an outdoor fireplace. My pal had been trying to help the old woman clean up her house. As we were burning up trash, my friend showed me brokerage house statements that showed that the elderly, disheveled woman was worth nearly a million dollars in investments alone—yet she lived like a pauper, or worse than that.

I helped out a few more times after that day, but then stopped going to that house. A few months later my friend called me up and said that the old woman had called the police and claimed that one of her handbags was missing and that it contained \$100,000 in cash—glad I was not around for that investigation. The old woman died several years ago, but I still wonder about whatever secrets that house had. -H.A. Jewell

Warning, Garbage Ahead

While researching some information, I came across a posting on the National Transportation Safety Board (the official NTSB website) that I knew would fit nicely in the pages of *Weird NJ*. It was from 1975, but written in reference to accidents two years before. It said, "At 11:20 PM. on Oct. 23, 1973, on the northern section of the New Jersey Turnpike, between Gate 15 and Route 46, the first of a series of nine collisions occurred." The cause? Garbage! Limited visibility conditions were caused by smoke from burning material in a nearby Hackensack abandoned dump, and fog. In all, 66 motor vehicles were involved. Nine people died and 39 others were injured. The NTSB issued a slew of recommendations for the Department of Environmental Protection and maintenance of disposal sites. With 108 official toxic waste dumps (and probably loads more unofficial ones), and tons of drivers in NJ, I swear to keep fully alert when coming home from a long mission far away.

-Anastasia Wasko

THE LIFE, DEATH, AND GARBAGE OF JUNK YARD GEORGE

In the exclusive area just north of 287 on Route 23 is the township of Kinnelon. It is an upper-middle to high-income neighborhood that prides itself on being pristine and rich. There are houses from \$300,000 to someplace in the millions. It even has a gated community within its boundaries called Smoke Rise. There are lakes and reservoirs spotting the wooded hills with beauty that words can't begin to express.

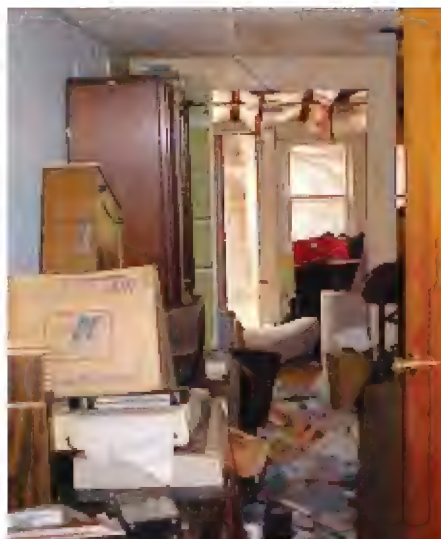
This is where Junk Yard George comes into play. He was a gentle hermit that lived on a few acres of land that sits along Boonton Avenue. His views of a pretty reservoir are something coveted by home builders all over the state of New Jersey. Like all people, he grew old and seemed to go through life all but unnoticed by family and neighbors. He was, as we know now, a disturbed individual that just needed some mental health assistance.

My friend was asked to go take a look at the property, but we were not prepared for the walk through. You see, Ol' George died in a hospital, owing a huge amount of taxes that were never collected, and the property changed hands for what seemed to be a pittance of what it was actually worth.

We almost did not find the dirt driveway to this bizarre and twisted expedition in which we were about to partake. We drove up the wooded drive and saw at the top what looked like a car. As we came closer, the car turned into a valley of junk. There was not a foot surrounding the driveway clear from the massive piles of boats, cars, file cabinets, bicycles, old stereos, and various other items.

The barn was filled with magazines and how-to books from the '60s and '70s. Old tools and various, no-value items were strewn all about the floors, walls, and ceiling. We decided to check out the house. Inside, the roof seemed to be fine and there was not much damage to the items in the house, except there were no windows left. There were four or five refrigerators that none of us would open, nor could we, due to all of the magazines, books and records scattered about two feet deep. There was a creepiness to this abandoned house and we felt we were invading a space we did not understand.

-Cee, Butler



THE G-MAN SPEAKS

For over 30 years, Jack The G-Man, who worked in the sanitation department, picked up garbage from Lawrence Harbor, Cliffwood Beach and nearby Old Bridge. He recently told *WNJ* about his great finds over the years:

One time we had a woman who mistakenly threw out \$5,000. It was cash from her store's receipts. We helped her find most of the money.

Throughout the years I've found some really remarkable stuff, including gold, silver, antique furniture, and false teeth! I actually found new carpet, which I installed in my house.

The best thing I found was an old Charlie Chaplin movie poster of "The Kid." I've heard that some of those posters go for up to \$65,000.

I've also found some great political buttons from WWI and a whole box of Santa Claus costumes that we all wore—during the summer!

Of course the worst stuff is picking up garbage from restaurants. Do you know what old fish and clam shells smell like on a hot summer day?

THOSE WERE THE GARBAGE DAYS!

Dear *Weird NJ*:

I don't know if you've ever done stories on town dumps, but in my youth, they were magical places in which we kids could spend the whole day exploring.

In Hillsdale, NJ, there was one behind Kinderkamack Road. People would bring antique furniture, old toys, wigs, fur coats, old records, old books and old magazines. We could spend a whole Saturday going through the place. What a treasure trove! Now in its place is a baseball field. That's progress! -Nana



SUCKED INTO THE WOODBRIDGE DUMP

One day in 1963 when I owned Miele Excavating and Grading Company, I was at a job with my bulldozer, tractor and trailer when I received a call on my two-way radio from my secretary. She said the town councilman wanted to know if I could come to Main Street in Woodbridge to the garbage dump (this was the the old clay pit area) because there was a fire. Arriving on the scene with my dozer, I was directed to go a few hundred feet north (this was the area where the clay figures were found, featured in *Weird NJ*).

Not far along, my dozer started to sink and gradually started to be swallowed by garbage and water. I left the dozer running and crawled off the back end. When the smoke cleared from the fire, I came back with another operator, but there was no dozer in sight. It had sunk more than 20 feet, being swallowed by the sludge. The bulldozer was buried for three days. A skin diver was called in and was able to get a cable hooked onto my dozer. With the help of another wrecker, it was lifted and pulled out. I brought it back to our yard where it was completely taken apart and cleaned, repaired and painted. Even with a new paint job, it was never the same. Whenever you went near it, it would spit out a few cans—but not beer. -John Miele

John wrote two books on Iselin: "Iselin Then and Now" Volumes I and II. He passed in 2013. -Eds.



FINALLY DIRT—This is what the bulldozer looked like Wednesday night after it was from its murky grave. It was covered with cars, boats and assorted types of two trucks from the Rick Brothers and a huge quantity of the Liberty Trucking Fords, brought it out to solid ground.

DID YOU HEAR THE ONE ABOUT THE DUMPSTER AND THE DEAD BODY?

I have a story to report about goings on at my previous place of employment—something bizarre that happened right after I was laid off. I left a crazy hectic job in NYC in the fashion industry because I wanted to do something a little less insane (HA!), so I took a job in Fairfield at a high-end appliance distributor.

It, for the most part, was very slow compared to working in NY. There was a sort of weird vibe to the building, especially the space we worked in. It was an old beer/soda distributor that was empty for a few years, and squatters had lived in the building from what I had heard. Pretty much all that was done to the building before our company occupied it was a coat of paint to cover the old 1970s paneling and "that was it."

There were a lot of weird rooms and cubbies—the office overall had a very weird floorplan. When the phone guy came in to install the phone and computer lines, he popped open a few of the ceiling tiles and there were TONS of dead birds, small animals, etc. sitting up there, rotting. He commented on that to the person in charge, who—in typical fashion—did nothing about it. They were never removed—I worked there for three years with that stuff a few feet above my head, and there are still people working in that office—God bless 'em. There was also weird equipment—this weird measuring instrument of some sort in a back room mounted on a wall that had the date and time it stopped operating, 1970-something.

There was a weird undertone—as soon as each of us started working there, we all suffered great tragedies/problems in our home lives, sudden deaths in the family, etc. One quiet afternoon a small house next to the office just burst into flames—it was a house a psychic lived in and worked out of, and of course, everyone made jokes like, "Couldn't they have PREDICTED the fire?"

After years of working there for long, BLINDINGLY boring afternoons stretching out for what seemed like forever, thank God I was finally laid off. I quickly got another job back in NYC within two weeks. One afternoon, my cell phone was ringing off the hook with calls from my old friends in Fairfield. Something CRAZY that hit all the major network news stations occurred.

The warehouse we used was a separate company, but it was directly downstairs from our offices. There was a new office temp the warehouse hired; they really liked him and were pleased with his performance. He was there about three weeks. One afternoon he excused himself and went outside the warehouse. The warehouse manager happened to just be absent-mindedly



looking out from the open bay doors and saw the temp's friends pull up in a car. The temp helped them pull something out of the trunk (this was 3:00 in the afternoon—broad daylight) which they threw into the dumpster, and the temp proceeded to jump on top of it a few times to, um, flatten whatever it was. Then the car with the friends left, and the temp went back to his desk.

This whole "dumping" and jumping took all of 10 minutes, so the bosses probably thought he was outside smoking a cigarette, or at the candy machine, or chit-chatting with one of the salespeople from upstairs as he was known to do. The warehouse manager, however, decided to take a gander in the dumpster. He peered into the dumpster and saw a plastic bag, which he poked with a stick. Then he noticed FEET sticking out. The temp, meanwhile, was inside, typing away on his computer but looking a little sickly and panicked. The warehouse manager spoke to the

bosses, and everyone from my office was up in arms, flipping out because they were told no one could leave till the cops came and processed the scene, which would be a few hours later!

That's when everyone started calling me and telling me what they had eventually heard from the police. It turns out the body that was placed in the dumpster during broad daylight was the temp's dead grandfather. This guy thought that it would be a good idea to have his friends, at his mother's advice, load his dead grandfather—who had been dead for a few days and sitting in the apartment—into a dumpster, because they had no money to bury him. Every major television station, along with a few Spanish stations, went to cover the story, and it was the lead story on every station. The funniest part of this was that they of course interviewed one of his bosses—she was shocked as anything, and kind of ambushed by all the news crews and unflattering bright lights being shone in her face. I fell off my chair, hysterical. All this a few months after I endured three years of boredom in that weird office! The temp was arrested, along with his mother, and an autopsy was performed to ensure they hadn't killed the grandfather. They didn't, but were charged with illegal disposal of a body. Obviously, he lost his clerical job at the warehouse—God knows this went on his record.

Obviously, my ex-coworkers for months were making dead body jokes and our customers were beyond shocked—but they came to expect the unexpected from us. Oddly enough, that big ol' green dumpster is still there! CRAZY. -*cyndibostonian*

CEMETERY RECYCLING

I was driving past Hillside Cemetery in Lyndhurst last February and noticed a big pile of artificial flowers and stuff in the back, past the graves. It was all things the grounds crew had cleared off the graves and was sparkling in the sun: Bits of tinsel and flowers leftover from Christmas decorations. I saw it for weeks until I finally went into the office and asked what they were doing with the pile. They said it was off to the landfill, and so I asked if I could take some things from it, telling them I'm an artist, and I might be able to use the stuff. They were pretty happy about it and also gave me permission to come back whenever I saw more out back. I couldn't believe all those things was there. It seemed like there were prayers and wishes stuck to them, and it was pretty heartbreaking.

So I left the bags of flowers under my worktable for a few months (you know how it goes), and didn't have a good idea what to do with them until I was with my friend Suzy Millions making things from the book she wrote (*The Complete Book of Retro Crafts*) for a craft show in Asheville. She was making these little petal pixies, pipe cleaner and plastic flower fairies. So cute, man.

I got home from Asheville and was digging through a box of craft crap I got at a yard sale, and I find these little painted wooden head beads, and long beads and wire... so I make a pixie-like fairy ornament with the cemetery flower as a skirt, some leaves as wings, the beads for arms and legs, and the little painted wooden head, some feathers for hair, and broken vintage jewelry (of which I have loads) for a crown, and viola! Salvaged Sprites—one of a kind ornaments. Each one has something from the cemetery in them. -*Kris Amels*





JUNK OUT OF TIME

Flemings Junkyard in Scullville, Egg Harbor Township, has a big car show every fall called The Pumpkin Run. They also have some great things on the property. There are a few dinosaurs, an old gas station "museum," a working diner (in the middle of a junkyard!), and lots more. *-Kathy*



RECYCLING THE PAST

This is definitely roadside weirdness—only in NJ—I've lived in many places up and down the East Coast and I've never seen a place like this. My husband and I were recently tooling down Route 9 in Barnegat when we came across what looked like a junkyard, but upon further inspection we discovered it was a place called "Recycling The Past." It was a cold, rainy day in January and we got out to look around.

This place had a really unique inventory! It really looks like a scrap heap when you first drive in but upon further inspection it has some really cool stuff. First, there were all sorts of old doors in every shape and size. Some were nine/ten feet tall! There were gargoyles, giant pots, home radiators, huge pillars, an old English phone booth, rows and rows of old toilets, sinks, and bathtubs, old fireplace mantels, and tons of windows. It looked like a mansion after mansion had been stripped of all of their decorative character—like a mansion bone yard.

And things aren't cheap! We asked about one of the gargoyles and it was \$3500—I guess if you need a gargoyle that badly and you want one with some history then that's a pretty good deal. After speaking with the owner we found out that pieces of the old Upsala College were there. (My husband, who is from East Orange, recognized some of the pillars that were around.) And the owner had plenty of tales to tell—if you go, just pull him aside and pick his brain. I'm sure everything in this place has a story to tell—possibly even a few that are paranormal.

Here are some pictures I took, with one being of a cement façade that was made for The Warner Brothers Studio Store in Times Square (but never used)—it's now for sale for a mere \$10,000. Since my husband and I are in the process of renovating a 100-year-old house, I plan on going back when it warms up and taking a couple of hours to really examine all of the cool things this guy had for sale.

-Leslie Wherett

THE EVER CHANGING GREAT WALL OF TRASH

I am a self-employed artist in Burlington Township, NJ and these are photos from the landfill in the town where I live. We have a great Public Works Dept. and the photos show a wall that contains trash dumped by residents.

Some of the employees save certain hand-selected pieces of trash to go up on the honorary wall that has turned into an ever changing work of art, if you ask me. I started photographing the wall as it changes through each season. I call it the Ever-changing Great Wall of Trash and actually look forward to seeing what comes next each time I visit. I think it is pretty damn creative.

I asked Jeff Romani what the weirdest thing was that he has seen thrown away in the recycling center. He said that one of the weirdest and creepiest things he saw was an old 1940s dentist's wall display of teeth. He said there were so many teeth mounted to a display board and that it kind of creeped him out. I guess they were real teeth used for educational purposes.

The other funny story he told me was that someone threw away a prosthetic leg and he kept it for the wall to display it. He had it mounted on the wall and while Jeff was helping

someone, he saw some guy pluck it off the wall and start to load it in the trunk of his car. Jeff told him he was not allowed to remove anything from the recycling center (the sign says so, too) and the guy just stared at the leg and said to Jeff, "Oh well, I need a left one anyway and this is a right leg." Then he took it out and gave it back. Jeff said that guy was dead serious too.

Just a little extra detail to add to that prosthetic leg story, Jeff told us that there was a wing tip shoe still on it. Jeez, I wish I was there with my camera when that one came in. -Cheryl Painter



Jeff Romani of the Burlington County Public Works Department with some finds from the landfill.



BRINGING BACK THE DEAD FROM TRASH TO TREASURE

CRACKED GARBAGE

I'm a member of Etsy NJ and I find my best pieces of china going through Wall Township's garbage! I design broken china jewelry. Every weekend you'll find me on my bike riding up and down my neighborhood's streets looking for treasure. I not only find china that I can use in my jewelry but most of my displays for craft shows have been found on the streets of Wall. And sometimes I find old jewelry that's been thrown out that I can re-use the beads or clasps. -Marjorie

I live in Wall and I'm one of those people who will pull over and go through the trash to see what sort of treasures I might find. I like to take furniture and give it a new look. I've gotten some great dressers, night stands, coffee tables, desks, a glider swing, an old pie safe and a cabinet thing that I managed to drag into my van alone (the thing was huge!) My husband and I like to go out when it is "bulk pickup" in the area and see what we can find.

I like to think of it as recycling. I take the items home, clean them up and then give them new life through paint, collage, or deconstructing them and using the parts for something else. I've sold several pieces, but have mostly decorated my home and yard this way.

I've gone dumpster diving before with a friend where some store threw out all kinds of stuff. I did draw the line though and made her go digging in the dumpster! I've since heard that even though the store threw that stuff out, it's a big no no to take it—so I won't do that again. I'd rather stick to the curbs where I know I won't get in trouble for helping myself! -Kecia Deveney, Etsy Street Team



What's YOUR favorite Garbage Story?

We asked our readers what their favorite garbage stories were, and here are some of their replies.

Dead Pig And Dirty Magazines

One of our drivers was emptying a rear-load dumpster at an apartment complex in Riverside when he saw some teeth rattling into the bottom of the truck's hopper. Thinking a baby had been dumped in there, he called base and told them to get the cops, paramedics and coroner's office out there pronto. Everyone showed up, and when he opened up the truck, out came a dead pig.

I was out in McGuire AFB housing area picking up paper curbside. We came to one house and I started to throw large boxes in the truck. There was some packing paper stuffed in a bucket so I had to pull it out by hand. At the bottom of the bucket was a Panasonic digital camera. The camera still worked and I kept it (finders keepers)!

On a couple of occasions as a kid, my friends and I found dirty magazines on some people's curbside piles. (Talk about "trashy" women!) That was a big treat, but my overall favorite was a thick medical textbook which was copiously illustrated with photos of weird diseases and birth defects. I'm betting it's still somewhere in my dad's attic. -AJe2004

Army Stuff

I love dumpster diving! One of my most favorite finds was a bunch of army stuff in my apartment's dumpster room in the '70s. I mean, there were crates of stuff. There was even one of those canvas tents like you've seen on "M*A*S*H." We set it up on Route 46 by Hank's Franks in Lodi. The state police came by and told us to take it down but we put it back up a week later. -gypsywanderin

Flat Screen

I found a 32-inch CRT Flat Screen TV in the trash. It was in perfect working condition. It even had a DVD/VCR player attached to it. One of my best finds.

-bphenyon

The Stuff Your Parents Threw Away

When I was in college, my dad sold the house and left the contents without my knowing it was going: Micky Mantle and Sandy Koufax cards, first edition comics, Plasticman, Batman, etc., old silver dollars, Walking Liberties, old toys in perfect condition, "Johnny Lieutenant" guns—rifle and 50 caliber handgun, grenades and working ammo (that would NEVER be sold today—it could put your eye out, kid). Also there was a Lionel train set, a rocket launching set with a command module and a spring-loaded launcher that threw a plastic 10-inch rocket 30 feet in the air (on Christmas morning it got stuck in the ceiling of the house on first launch—never again to be repeated in the house as my mother was horrified and my dad and I howled). There was a racing car set with loop-the-loop and a ton of other stuff. Never even really thought of it until the question was asked. Probably thousands of dollars worth of stuff so I hope whoever got it knows what they have and appreciates it.

Found curbside, being thrown out, a set of drawers painted green with several other coats of paint, an original Louis XIV worth about \$8,000 (karma comes around!) Also found by a friend and gifted to me, two original cels of Tweety and Sylvester that WB threw out in the trash regularly years ago.

-piggy wiggly



RYAN DOAN

Used Ass Wiper

I think my dumpster diving career started and ended with a note I found in a garbage can at a beach near my home, when I about 10. I was all ready to read some juicy secrets when I realized that the paper had been used to wipe someone's ass. Taught me a thing or two.

-Jodhiay

Moldy Barbies

I was about 10 years old and my best friend Debbie and I were going through trash bags in the woods behind a house near me. To my excitement, I found about 30 Barbie dolls. Some had speckled moldy dots on their faces, missing limbs and heads, and bad haircuts, but still I took them all home and cleaned them up the best I could. I remember that stubborn mold never coming off. -ginamtm

Victorian Coins Along The Passaic

The best thing that my friend and I found wasn't in the garbage but something that got washed up from the Passaic River. It was a small chest that we found. When we opened it up, there were old English Victorian coins from the 1800s. Can't imagine why something like that would be found in the river. -Denice

Cameras And Jewelry

I found a 1930s press camera in perfect working order in the carrying case. I gave it to my brother who is much more of a photography head than I am. He would cut 120 film to fit the film backs. It came with two film backs. Each film back was double sided, giving him a total of four shots ready to go when he got it set up. He used eastern block film stock to get that authentic old-type black and white that you do not get with the currently available stuff. He sold the thing for \$250 on eBay. Sometimes I wish I did not throw out my GI Joes when I was 12. I could get a couple hundred bucks for the stuff on eBay now.

Once about 25 years ago I was walking along the railroad tracks behind the River Edge Diner. I saw some shiny things in the weeds on the slope. I went up there and most of it was costume jewelry. It seemed like someone had pitched the stuff off the back of the parking lot. I still have a heavy thick 18 carat gold and jade bracelet and a sterling silver pocket watch from the early 1900s that I found there. -ivangrozney

Jelly Donuts And Narcotics

The weirdest thing I ever found in an actual dumpster were these two collections of "items"...and it led to some big trouble as a very young child.

The first time was at the local supermarket where they would throw away the day old donuts we all played with, and some of us even ATE the damn things!!

I just liked to squeeze all the jelly out of the powdered ones...they were HUGE bags, like the big paper ones you throw leaves into nowadays.

The most dangerous and weird find was a few weeks later at the pharmacy next dumpster down: About 150 pounds of expired schedule C narcotics the pharmacist just tossed in there.

We thought it was candy and an alert parent noticed us all dividing them up into different groups of colors and shapes, like baseball cards or something.

This was in the '60s, and NO, I didn't eat any of the donuts or the colorful little pills. The things kids do. -wizard343

Money And A Go-Kart

Back when I was around 10, I was walking around my neighborhood and found money; it was a crinkled \$100 bill. I was so shocked to see it laying 3/4 in the entrance of the gutter about to fall into the jaws of disgustingness. Luckily I plugged it out and spent that money on some fresh Pokemon cards and some old school GameBoy games. My mother had always told me to say out of the gutter 'cause it was dirty. I guess she was wrong.

Also, a few years later I found, during spring clean-up, a homemade go-kart (pieces of wood with wheels and a worn out hole-ridden cloth seat and a crude steering wheel from a piece of wood). My neighbor and I dragged it across the block up to a huge hill to take it for a spin. I was the adventurous one so I decided to try and tame this beast down the colossal, always frightening hill of death. My neighbor, being two years younger than me, had a running start and shoved me down the hill. It all seemed good till the plastic wheels started to vibrate and then I heard eventual clanking of metal. To my dismay the rusted bolts holding the front wheels to the wooden frame had been destroyed. I watched as the left front wheel, then right front wheel FELL OFF while I was zooming down the hill. I screamed as the whole makeshift go-cart did a complete 360 and flung me to the pavement. My neighbor was shocked and sprinted all the way down the hill to see me lying in the middle of the street. Being the older kid, I sucked up the pain from my now bleeding knees and elbows and shrugged off the dirt and said, "That was awesome!" I still have a scar on my elbow from that day as a constant reminder not to play with unsturdy objects. *-Squeak91*

Money And Cell Phones

I don't have a car and I am 56 years old. I carried a printer last week home over three miles. Great printer! I mostly pull out computers. I take them home and open them up on the driveway. I pull out what I need and the rest goes in the garbage. If I keep the whole unit I throw out one of my older ones. I have never seen a laptop yet! My goal was to find a P4 computer. That's easy now!

While walking, I have found a \$100 dollar bill wrapped around the base of a bush by the wind. Mostly I find fresh 20 dollar bills straight from the ATM. As I pass stores I find receipts with money wrapped in them. Lots of quarters!

I have found and returned several cell phones. One was a Razor, when they first came out. The funniest was lost by a guy getting out of a cab. He was talking on the phone as he got out and the phone just vanished! He had the cab driver call the phone—nothing! I came walking by and saw the top half of the phone sitting on a hillside in the grass. I called several people listed on the phone. The guy's mom said he would lose his head if it were not attached, and then she hung up on me! The next person I called was a girl at a Mets game. She had her boyfriend come and get the phone after the game. The boyfriend was the guy's cousin. We figure the phone dropped and bounced off the guy's foot then slid down the hillside in the grass.

While at a 7-11 a group of us got talking about finding wallets. I always return them with the cash still inside. The other people were giving me heat! I still return them to this day, if there is a name inside.

Here is my WEIRD find: The very next day I am walking in Nutley. There on the ground is a Hallmark bag. I picked it up and looked inside. There is an envelope that is not signed with a card full of 20s. I looked around and saw a pickup truck parked on an angle. As I turn around I see a house with the front door open with only the outer screen door closed. I go up and ring the bell. I hear someone running around inside. When I rang the bell I heard someone groan. I waited awhile and then rang it again. One of the best looking women I have ever seen answered the door. I think she stopped home quickly to get changed when I rang the bell. As I held up the Hallmark bag, the look on her face was priceless! *-kleinbauer*

Rodan!

I found a two-and-a-half-foot "Rodan" (you know, the flying monster that fought Godzilla way back when)! It is currently hanging in my basement and has a few things hanging off of it for a great goofy effect. *-xhippie*

Cameras, Suture Needles, Mannequins And A Rolled Up Body

I was a cop in South Jersey in the '70s and we used to find all kinds of stuff along the curbsides while working the midnight shift. One night I saw a large army green box that was out with somebody's trash so I got out of my car to check it out. It turned out to be an old military camera that was

used on planes to take aerial photos. It looked like it was probably attached to the bottom of the plane and then took photos of targets. I took it home with me but forgot what I ever did with it.

Another time I saw a suspicious character walking along a road late at night and when I approached him, I saw him throw a bag into a nearby dumpster. I stopped him and asked him what he had thrown away and he acted dumb, like he didn't know what I was talking about. When I searched the dumpster I found the bag and found it was full of cadaver suture needles in various sizes. These are the needles used to sew corpses back up after autopsies. He refused to tell me where he got them and since it isn't a crime to carry cadaver needles in New Jersey, I let him go. I kept the needles, though, and added them to my collection of oddities.

One time while checking a local mall, we found a bunch of female mannequins in a dumpster. We took the best one, an attractive young lady with long blonde hair, and made her our mascot. I was a member of a tactical unit at the time and all of us rode bikes back then. One of our guys had an old '40s Harley with a side car and we used to put our mannequin in his side car and watch people's reactions when they saw us flying by with a naked chick in the side car. We also posed her in phone booths at 7-11s and would watch people's reactions from across the street.

Here's another weird one...not a trash or dumpster story, but pretty close.

When I was a rookie I rode around with an older cop who showed me the ropes for a few months before I went to the State Police Academy. One night around 2:00 AM, when everything had quieted down, we sat in a gas station and watched the traffic light to see if people would run the red light or not. We watched as an old Falcon station wagon ran the light and proceeded to stop the driver. As I approached the driver, I looked in the back of the station wagon and saw a rolled up carpet. As I peered closer, I saw two shoes, complete with feet, sticking out of the end of the carpet. My partner said my eyes opened wide as saucers and I stuttered and stammered as I asked the driver if he knew that there appeared to be a body rolled up in the carpet in the rear of his car. Nonchalantly he said, "Oh yeah, I just picked it up and have to take to a funeral parlor across the river in Pennsy. Turned out that the guy had a job picking up bodies and taking them to the funeral parlor in his car. We had never run across anything like this before so it took awhile before we were able to find out that it wasn't illegal to transport dead bodies over state lines. We checked out the guy's story and found he was on the up and up, so we let him go. My partner busted my chops for years after that. *-snowlion*

Sex Toys On The Beach

This didn't happen to me. It happened to my boyfriend, and if anything, it shows the ocean can be construed as a very large dumpster.

A couple of years ago, his family rented a house in Loveladies for a few weeks. One afternoon, he decided to take a swim. The beach was pretty quiet: just he, his brother-in-law, and a lifeguard were there.

He and the lifeguard saw something black bobbing up and down in the water. It looked like a Coke bottle covered in seaweed. So he went into the water, noting that the seaweed was actually attached to something leather, like a strap of some kind. He grabbed the strap and turned to show the find to the lifeguard when he realized what he was holding actually was... a sex toy. The kind that you attach (I think that paints the picture without getting TOO graphic). Horrified, he dropped it immediately back into the drink.

Now, Loveladies prides itself on being a family-oriented place. At least, a place where you won't run into any floating sex toys in the ocean. So they grabbed a stick, fished the thing out again, and threw it into a nearby trash can. Immediate Disneyfication! Just like Times Square!

To be fair, the sex toy could have washed up anywhere along L.B.I., so don't take this as a treatise against the beaches of Loveladies. I'm sure it's been nothing but pristine ever since. *-Jodhiay*

Floating Mannequins

Best thing I found was a child mannequin. During one massive flood back in the late '70s, this "kid" floated right by the house, so I grabbed it.

We used it on Mischief Night that year... Climbed a tree with it, tied a rope around its neck and when cars drove by, we would drop it. Scared the bejesus out of folks.

I don't think we could get away with doing that anymore. *-schizoid2k*

OVERBOOK ASYLUM LAST WALK

I've been trespassing in Overbook and photographing the asylum buildings since my early teenage years. When demolition crews began tearing down the hospital in 2011, I made it my business to thoroughly document the process. This meant weekly and sometimes daily visits to the abandoned insane asylum. I put in a lot of time over the past seven years hanging around the security fence and zooming in with my camera to capture the heavy machines eating away at my favorite haunt.

Eventually the demolition crew got used to seeing me creeping around in the bushes and a few of them friended me online. They were pretty cool about tipping me off to when certain buildings would be torn down and even gave me a truck





load of reclaimed Overbook wood to use for an art project. When I showed up to record the powerhouse smokestack being demolished, the company boss saw me in the woods and asked if I wanted to come inside the security perimeter for a better view. This was an extremely rare invitation and I eagerly jumped at the chance.

While I was busy setting up camera angles, two of the demo guys came over and asked if I would come back later when they got off work. They had access to the remaining wards, but didn't know much about the history behind the decaying cell-lined corridors. They wanted





a tour of the asylum from the perspective of a former trespasser who could show them where all the "cool freaky stuff" was located.

I showed up at dusk when everyone else had left for the day and they drove me inside the perimeter in a work truck. It was a few days before Halloween, the leaves were turning colors, and a spooky fall vibe lingered around the sanitarium. As we entered the labyrinth of mental wards I was keenly aware that this would be my last walk through the Essex County Hospital Center. The photos on these pages reflect how the old asylum looked just before it was demolished. All of these buildings are now gone forever.

R.I.P. Overbrook Asylum 1898-2018 -wheeler

Check out more of Wheeler's Overbook material at luckycigarette.com

See demolition videos on Wheeler's Instagram

@wheeler antabanez

Watch the video Overbook Asylum Last Walk at youtube.com/wheeler666

WHEELER'S OVERBOOK





ARTIFACTS OF A LOST CIVILIZATION



I love to walk railroads. I take the Newark Light Rail to work every day. The section of the Light Rail from Branch Brook Park in Newark to Grove Street in Bloomfield was built in the right of way of what was the Orange Branch of the Erie Railroad. Beyond Grove Street, there is an abandoned section I've been wanting to explore for years.

In 2016, I learned that the Arlington Avenue Bridge that was built to cross this rail line had historical significance and I wanted to find out why. In June 2016, I went to explore the



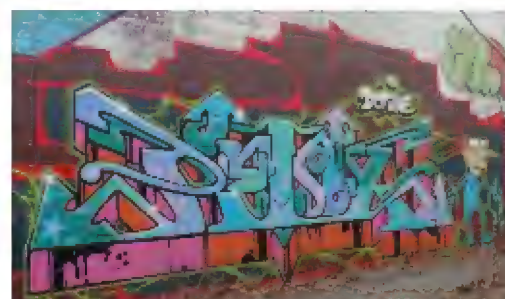


bridge. I didn't see anything particularly historically significant about the bridge, but the train line itself seems to me what is historically significant. One reason is because it was used by Thomas Edison. It connected his factories in Belleville with his factories and home in West Orange. In 1911, Edison ran an experimental battery-powered train on the line. The passenger service on the rail line influenced the development of residential neighborhoods nearby and as a freight line, it was an integral part of the development of industry in Bloomfield. Bakelite, International Arms and Fuze, American La France, General Electric, General Motors, Westinghouse, Lehn and Fink and most recently, Hart's Mountain were some of the factories serviced by this train line. Passenger service on the line was discontinued in 1955. None of the industry remains.

When I went to explore the Arlington Avenue Bridge, I discovered there were people living under it. I wasn't sure how they would react to me invading their space, so I left them alone and avoided further exploration. There was a man and a woman. I wondered if they were a couple or if they were just sharing the space, and I wondered if there was more than just the two of them living there. I used to think if I had to be homeless, I'd like to live under a bridge. It might not be so bad for half of the year, but what do you do in the winter?

Recently in the spring of 2018, in the context of repurposing our local abandoned railroads as recreational trails, I decided to explore the train line, this time walking from Bloomfield Avenue to the NJ Transit Boonton line near the Watsessing Station. That's when I took these photos. There are several industrial buildings on the way. Their rear walls are now a canvas for graffiti. The people are no longer living there, but they abandoned all of their artifacts—DVDs, stuffed animals, mattresses, suitcases, and bags of clothing that look like they were taken from charity drop off boxes. A friend of a friend who knows some of the graffiti writers interpreted some of the graffiti.

-Rich Rockwell



Interpreting the writing along the route. From top to bottom: Fiesta, Give, Oven and Relax.





ARMLESS IN BOONTON: JOHN T. OWENS

Here is a Wendt Studio photo from Boonton of John T. Owens and his wife Matilda. Owens was an armless virtuoso musician who could play a violin, banjo and guitar with only his feet. He toured all over the country in the late 1890s. He also did his own tuning for each instrument. This photo was taken probably during a tour stop in the Garden State. Wendt Studios had a specialty of making souvenir cards of many entertainers, traveling shows and circus performers. Entertainers often bought these cards to sell to their audiences. As you can see from the back of this photo, John Owens also signed his name.

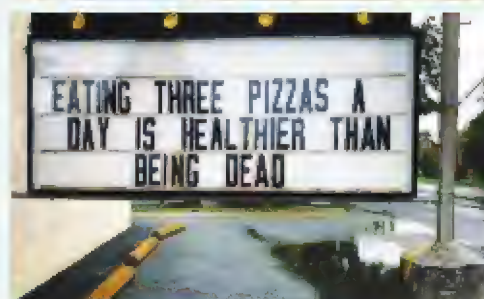
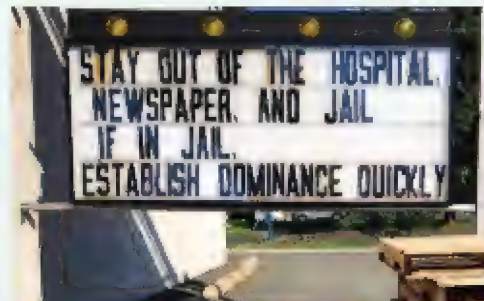
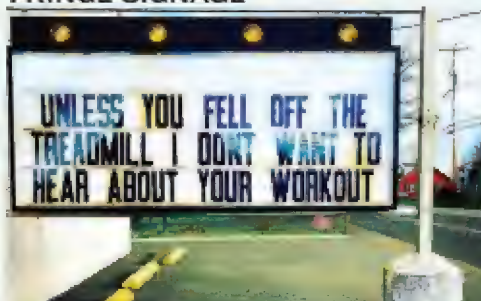
John T. Owens

The 1987 Sleep Zone Mystery Of Camden County

A weird thing happened along the Atlantic City Expressway in 1987. The five-and-a-half-mile stretch of toll road that runs through Camden County saw a mysterious series of 10 fatal accidents, seven of which were caused by drivers becoming drowsy and falling asleep behind the wheel. There were 12 deaths: the highest fatality record of any year. Most of the accidents originated in the westbound lanes, and occurred during daylight hours and in clear weather with little traffic, according to police and highway officials.

New Jersey highway authorities recently released a report stating that there has been a 20-year low in fatal accidents along the state's highways. Maybe the 1987 Sleep Zone was caused by weary Atlantic City casino gamblers coming back from an all nighter, or maybe the Indian curse of Rt. 55 in Deptford had moved a little north for a bit.

FRINGE SIGNAGE



PA SIGNS SAY THE DARNDDEST THINGS

I found this local business in Gilbertsville, PA that has AMAZING roadside signs. I've photographed them from time to time. I'd love to know who exactly is authoring these—they're great!

—Christian Montone



MILLTOWN'S MICHELIN PLANT GONE

This was the former site of the first Michelin Tire plant to be built in the United States, located on Ford Avenue in Milltown. Although Michelin Tire left the location over 87 years ago, the 22-acre site has always been a part of the town. After a collapse of one of the buildings in 2015, demolition was sought for most of the property. The water tower and smokestack pictured here were part of the Lawrence Brook Gristmill that was in operation up to the 1840s, and so far still remain on the site.

These photos come from Caitlyn Mezynski who wrote, "These pictures show what I grew up around. It's an old Michelin tire factory from Milltown. I figure I would send it in because at the end of 2016 they started to rip it down and it broke the hearts of a lot of people. It was part of Milltown's history and now it's just an empty lot with the smokestack and water tower still standing. I took the first picture back in 2014 while walking my dogs and it's been my favorite picture in my phone. The factory will be missed by everyone in Milltown."



THE NINE DROWNINGS FEEDER DAM

As a history buff and a long-term NJ resident, I read *Weird NJ* all the time. I also see that you've done a lot of coverage on the Passaic River.

I have a similar historical place for you. Have you ever heard of Feeder Dam? It's a beautiful, scenic spot that is cut off from the public. It's a tributary to the old Morris Canal. It's hidden, located behind Keuhm Farm (Black Oak Ridge Road) and the post office (Jackson Avenue).

It has an amazing history, but before I get to that, let me tell you how I know about it. When I was about 10 years old (in 1978) a sign caught my attention on Jackson Road, near where the post office is now. It said "9 Drownings." The sign was clearly meant to deter people from walking back there, but it had the opposite effect as it attracted curious kids. We were very careful. No one ended up in the water. But we hung out back there, skimming stones, fishing, exploring, etc.

Even back then, I wondered why this area was cut off from the public. I walked back there since with my son and daughter. Still beautiful. Anyway, the river serves as the border between Wayne and Pequannock. In addition to the history it played as part of the Morris Canal, I would be interested in the nine drownings. That's quite a bit for one location. Is it exaggerated to scare people away? Maybe. It was a popular area in which to canoe. Were there multiple accidents? Was it one major accident? Did people drown during the construction? It seems like drownings might be the reason the place is kept hidden.

-Doug



MARK MORAN

MYSTERIES AND SCANDAL AT HELIS FARM

I have always been fascinated by a pair of gates on what I thought was a cattle farm in Jobstown, NJ. What I have learned involves a famous multi-millionaire, high society, international horse racing, mystery and scandal.

Pierre Lorillard, IV whose great grandfather founded the Lorillard Tobacco Company (the oldest tobacco company in the US), established the finest stud farm in the US in 1872 in Jobstown. He was the first American to win the English Derby. He won with a NJ-bred and trained horse, Iroquois, who went on to win the St Leger Stakes.

Pierre owned the original mansion that is now The Breakers in Newport RI. He sold it to Cornelius Vanderbilt for \$450,000 (\$12 million today) but the original mansion burned down on November 25, 1892. Vanderbilt subsequently built the showpiece that it is today.

Pierre married Emily Taylor, who was one of the elite New York society Taylor family. He built a beautiful mansion in Jobstown, with a portion set apart as a gaming room complete with a roulette wheel and other gaming tables. The gate, which first drew my interest, was from a Bank in NYC that was demolished in the 1800s.

Mrs. Lorillard did not share in Pierre's love of racing and was rarely seen at the estate in NJ. The part of playing hostess to Pierre's lavish parties fell to an "acquaintance"—Miss Lillian Barnes. Miss Barnes married Lewis Allen, a sort of stablehand on the estate, for convenience, but he soon dropped out of sight.

This brings us to the mystery surrounding the Roman bath. It was rumored that Pierre built a lavish Roman bath house to please his friend Mrs. Allen, but as none of the employees were allowed anywhere near that part of the estate, it was never proven and stayed a rumor.

In 1901 Pierre Lorillard died and that is where the real scandal began. In his will he did not will the Rancocas racing property to his wife or children, but to none other than Mrs. Lillian Allen. It caused a big stir in society as well as a big court battle. Mrs. Allen eventually won the case and was awarded the property as the sole owner. Unfortunately, she was unable to maintain the huge racing barns and stable of elite horses and

eventually sold the property to Harry Sinclair.

Harry Sinclair invested considerable funds to continue the Rancocas breeding and racing success, making it one of the dominant racing stables in the United States during the 1920s. For Sinclair, trainer Sam Hildreth brought the stable victories in the Kentucky Derby and in three Belmont Stakes. Between 1923 and 1929 the stable had six horses compete in the Preakness Stakes but never managed a win.

Again, more scandal as Harry Sinclair went to jail in what became known as the Teapot Dome Scandal. He had to sell his horses and the estate.

The site continues to operate as the Helis Stock Farm. The more than 2,000-acre farm includes a number of original Rancocas Stable-era buildings that can be seen from the roadside; including a



The Roman bath house that was once on the property of Helis Farms. Are remnants still there?

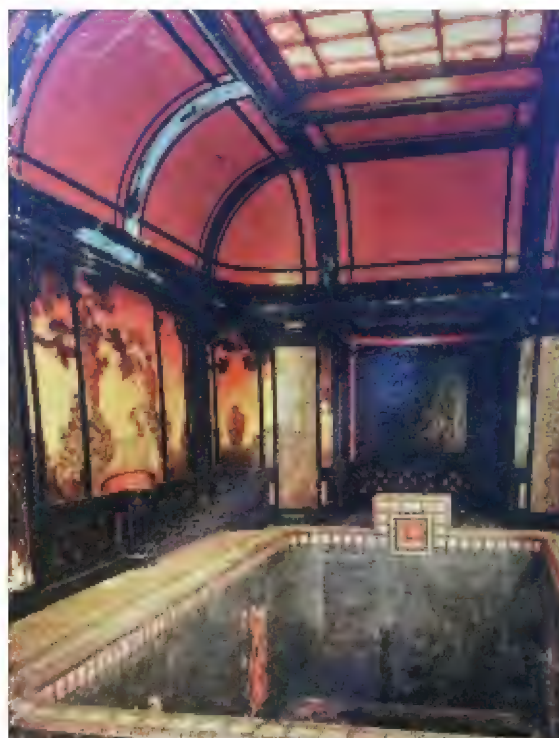


Magnificent stained glass windows and Romanesque art adorned the walls.

training barn with 1,100 windows enclosing a half-mile oblong indoor track.

Oh and as for the Roman bath, in 1949 the great New Jersey chronicler, Henry Charlton Beck, was taken to this mysterious area of the estate, by the old coachman Will, where stood the Roman bath with a rotting pavilion by the larger lake. It was remarkably preserved and at that time, even the art glass of the skylight remained unbroken. The photos here are from 1949. Only in NJ!

I wonder if it's still there? -Sally Miller, *Tabernacle*



At one time light filtered through a mosaic skylight to illuminate the tiled bathing pool at the bath house.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RED-HEADED SAILOR BURIED UPRIGHT



On May 1, 1914, a road crew grading Sheridan Avenue in Seaside Heights made a grisly discovery. As they raked out the dirt, laborer Watson Mathis, son of Seaside Park mayor Charles W. Mathis, saw what looked like a pile of red hair, and upon further investigation found a skull underneath the titan locks. Attached to the cranium was a complete skeleton standing straight up under the sandy surface of the road.

The story was first related in the *New Jersey Courier*, which reported that shoes and bits of its clothing were still evident on the cadaver, but had "crumbled when exposed to the air, all but the soles."¹ The stranger's death perplexed the observers, who could "form no opinion as to who the man may have been or how he got there,"¹ but they agreed that considering the vertical position of the body, the victim must have "walked into a bank of quicksand after a storm and had been unable to get out."¹

The story ended there with no further information as to what happened to the body until 1963, when an expanded version was published in C. Byron Wortman's book, *The First Fifty: A Biographical History of Seaside Heights, New Jersey*, in an interview with Seaside Heights Borough superintendent, Vernon G. Casler.

According to Casler, he was working as a laborer the day the skeleton was uncovered and witnessed the event. The then-14-year-old recounted seeing the bones, bleached white by time. He also saw remnants of the man's clothing, which looked like "sailor's garb,"² and some "rusted metal that appeared to resemble a belt buckle of the type pirates were always pictured as wearing."²

Casler also solved the mystery of what was done with the remains after the county coroner agreed that there was no foul play involved, and that the bones were likely that of an ancient sailor whose untimely death came when a sinkhole formed under his feet, swallowing him down into the earth. In an unusual move, a man named Clarence Anthony, a Seaside Heights fireman at the time,³ decided to bury the bones in the area of the fireplace under the foundation of a new house he was building nearby.² According to Casler, the house no longer existed, but as far as he knew, the property had not been disturbed, and "the red-haired pirate [was] still in his resting place, where he was deposited 50 years ago."²

Of course nearly another 50 years have passed since Mr. Casler told his tale, so it is not likely that the foundation of the Anthony house still remains on the property, but a search for the grave of the unfortunate sailor is currently being conducted. Should his remains ever be found, he will be given a proper burial. -Steve Baeli

¹ William Fischer, "Skeleton Found in Beach Sand at Seaside Heights," *New Jersey Courier*, May 8, 1914, p. 1

² C. Byron Wortman, *The First Fifty: A Biographical History of Seaside Heights, New Jersey* (Unknown: 1963), p. 56.

³ This fact according to the records of Seaside Heights historian, Christopher Vaz in a phone interview on July 11, 2011.

again at the Republican primaries in September.

Skeleton Found in Beach Sand at Seaside Heights

Seaside Heights, May 1.—While grading Sheridan avenue at this resort between the railroad and the ocean, Watson Mathis found a skeleton of a man yesterday. The skeleton was standing upright in the sand. The skull was thickly covered with red hair. Parts of shoes were still on the feet, but crumbled when exposed to the air, all but the soles. There were also parts of clothing, that also crumbled when the air reached it. The old residents on the beach can then say much as to who the man may have been, or how he got there. They say it looks as if he walked into a bank of quicksands after a storm and had been unable to get out. This supposition is based upon the fact that he was standing up when found, and if he had been buried when dead, he would have been placed horizontally in the ground.

Watson Mathis, who found the skeleton, is the son of Mayor Charles W. Mathis of Seaside Park, who has the contract to grade and gravel the street.

THE TRIUMPHANT AND TRAGIC LIFE OF HERMANN WINKELMANN

CHATEAU GRAND PHOTOS BY GEORGE GUYER

by Bill Pane

For years the lavish Chateau Grand in Lakewood was a place of joy and celebration. But for one former owner it would end in heartbreak and despair. Like the building he once called his own he too would fall into disrepair, a once dignified man living a sadly solitary existence. That man was Hermann Winkelmann.

A self-made man and the embodiment of the American Dream, his life has been described as rags to riches to rags again. The legacy of his triumphant and tragic life lingered prominently on Rt. 9 for years in that giant hulking remnant of a once thriving empire.

Prosperity and Loss in America

The rise and fall of Hermann Winkelmann began in 1961 when he emigrated from Germany at age 19. After a few menial jobs he landed work with a butcher but the ambitious young man had his eyes firmly set on a better life. Within two years he had purchased his first piece of land and opened his own butcher shop. Two years later he purchased the adjacent liquor store.

Despite the potential roadblocks of learning to run a business while adjusting to a new country and language his business prospered. By 1973 he had opened Winkelmann's German American Restaurant, decorating it in the rustic style of his native Northern Germany.

As his enterprise grew, Hermann Winkelmann's stature grew with it as he became one of Lakewood's most prominent businessmen. He volunteered for the Mantoloking Fire Department, served on the Paul Kimball Hospital Board of Directors and helped shoulder the cost of vests for the Lakewood Police Department among many magnanimous acts of community service.

Winkelmann also volunteered his restaurant as the site for the Elks Club handicapped children's dinner and was honored as Lakewood Elks "Man of the Year."

In April 1980 his restaurant appeared on WABC's Eyewitness Gourmet. In the press photo a sharply dressed Hermann Winkelmann beams proudly as



food reporter Bob Lape samples a piece of Black Forest cake. It was a golden time for the German immigrant and he was enjoying every minute of it.

By the mid 1980s his empire sat on 14 acres and was raking in annual revenues of \$5 million. But Mr. Winkelmann had bigger plans: A Bavarian shopping village with a restaurant, gift shop, hotel, ice cream parlor, bologna factory, microbrewery, and more to take his business beyond a mere dining establishment into the realm of family attraction.

"Something like Busch Gardens," he said. "I wanted this to be my gift to this great land, America, which had made this possible for me."

Financing this grandiose plan was met with reluctance from area banks till he spoke to the First National Bank of Toms River. Brash, freewheeling and known for taking on loans others considered too risky, the bank often encouraged clients to borrow according to a former bank officer.

Eventually First National's aggressive ways drew the attention of federal regulators. A closer look found a failing bank on the brink of collapse due to "liberal lending policies, poor underwriting standards and lack of oversight resulting in an excess amount of high risk loans." They had racked up \$232 million worth of loans in default and would collapse in May 1991, the largest bank failure in New Jersey history.

Under pressure to recoup loaned money First National



began to pass that pressure onto their clients. On January 2, 1989 they demanded Mr. Winkelmann bring all his proceeds from New Year's Eve and Day to the bank. He would tell of hastily stuffing \$35,000 into a suitcase just to appease them.

But the pressure Hermann Winkelmann faced from the bank was just the beginning of his troubles. As his business empire faltered his personal life soon followed.

A Man Without a Home

In February 1989 Hermann Winkelmann was removed from his home by police and involuntarily committed to the psychiatric ward of Paul Kimble Hospital. He was taken out in handcuffs despite having no history of violent behavior.

"I never felt so poor," he said. "People in our neighborhood must've thought I was mafia."

Inside Kimble doctors reached a diagnosis of bipolar disorder. Over his objections Mr. Winkelmann was treated with powerful medications that had seriously adverse effects.

"I was forcibly medicated," he stated. "I believe my constitutional rights were violated."

It was the beginning of a hellish 18 months where he was subjected to different medications from different doctors till he was "stuttering and drooling." He was whisked off to the Cooper Clinic in Texas, lost over 35 pounds and experienced violent upper body tremors he believed were caused by the lithium he was made to take, again allegedly against his will.

He finally returned to Ocean County and a faltering business empire. Though some creditors were willing to give more time, it was too late. He had little choice but to declare bankruptcy and sell his business. It sold in November 1990 and reopened as The Castle.

Other unforeseeable troubles pushed Hermann Winkelmann further away from the successful man he'd so recently been. His marriage faltered and he became estranged from his wife and children. He had trouble landing work and found employers shying away when they learned of his hospitalization, the stigma of mental illness becoming a stumbling block to his efforts to bounce back.

His life became nomadic. After being unable to keep up with utility bills he was forced to leave his Mantoloking home, staying in cheap motels along Rt. 9 or a trailer park in Jackson. At his lowest Hermann Winkelmann was homeless and living in Lakewood's Tent City.

But he was both resilient and convinced of his eventual return. A chance encounter with a sympathetic Chinese restaurant owner gave him new hope, resulting in the opening of another butcher shop in Brick.

"I still have a dream that is unfinished," he said in a 1993 *Asbury Park Press* article brimming with optimism. "And I know in my heart of hearts that I will have another chance."

But he remained attached to his former domain. A piece of his heart stayed behind even as he sought alternate routes to business revival. Sadly none would recapture the magic of his earlier success.

In 2009 he tried again to rebuild his life. There was talk of a hotel with luxury suites and a heliport in another *Asbury Park Press* article but it was not to be. Hermann Winkelmann passed away quietly on September 10, 2009. He was simply found dead in his seat at the Lakewood bus terminal.

A Still Familiar Figure Around Town

Despite the loss of his business Hermann Winkelmann remained a familiar figure around Lakewood, at times squatting at the site of his former domain. Passersby couldn't help but notice the strangely out of place man sitting amongst the overgrowth of the Chateau Grand.

He also became a thorn in the side of Lakewood's governing body by keeping up a fight to regain the business he felt was unfairly taken from him. His name can be found sprinkled throughout archived minutes of planning board meetings.

In April 2006 he spoke before the board concerning a proposal to raze his former establishment for townhouses, claiming he'd filed a lawsuit against the town for approving the plan illegally. The proposal would move closer to approval that night despite what the *Asbury Park Press* called "the boisterous objections of Hermann Winkelmann."

Reading the transcript of that meeting could never fully capture the atmos-



phere or emotions of the participants. It does however give a glimpse into the feelings Winkelmann held for his former domain as well as those of the Lakewood bureaucrats for this formerly esteemed member of the community. It was not pretty.

Winkelmann questioned the presence of police, wondering if their attendance had been requested and if so by whom. He peppered the board with questions about the project before veering away from any relevance into a display of deep feelings of victimization.

The following spring he was back. As Winkelmann rambled on, emotion at times getting the better of him, one board member reminded him there was a five minute limit to comments from the public and told him to "get to the point."

The contrast between the participants could not be more striking: The emotionally invested Winkelmann overcome by the gut wrenching possibility of his never realized Bavarian Village being unceremoniously bulldozed into oblivion and the stoic, business as usual planning board annoyed at his efforts to halt them from moving forward with plans for the site. Years later it is still hard not to sense a mutual enmity.

Was Justice Served?

Given his animosity for Lakewood officials it would be easy to presume there was no lawsuit against the town and his appearances before the board served only as desperate attempts to save his former kingdom from demolition. But evidence suggests otherwise.

As reported by Joyce Blay for the weblog NJ News and Views he did indeed file a lawsuit against Lakewood Township in 2006 alleging "perjury, financial, physical, mental and psychological distress." After questioning their lack of response to his year-old lawsuit Winkelmann added his intention to file for judgement the following day.

"Let the judge decide and let justice prevail in the name of God," he bellowed in a burst of emotion seldom seen at these typically tedious meetings. It was one example of the deep conviction and raw emotion he brought to his efforts at halting the destruction of what was still a dream very much alive in his heart.

The proposal got no further and Mr. Winkelmann's ramshackle hall remained standing. He finally got a day in court in May 2009 and scored a minor victory when the judge rejected the current owner's argument to throw out the case. But the elation of that day was short lived. Four months later Hermann Winkelmann was dead.

Whether any of his lawsuits had merit or could have resulted in a favorable ruling is irrelevant at this point. What isn't irrelevant is how the justice system failed him. The man who steadfastly believed in America fought mightily to get this day and by then it was too late to save a lost empire or a once promising life gone terribly wrong.

Dig deeply into this story and one begins to understand Hermann Winkelmann's harsh feelings for the local bureaucracy. Once a pillar of the community he was now treated as a nuisance, a desperate man who stood in

the way of progress with futile attempts to keep hope alive in a situation long since decided.

Could There Have Been a Better Ending?

Could Hermann Winkelmann have reclaimed and rebuilt his former empire or built a second business empire from scratch? He certainly thought so. In a 1993 *Asbury Park Press* article titled "Starting Over" he expresses his desire to reestablish himself and claims the impatience of First National was the ultimate cause of his fall.

"If they had just given me another six months it would have worked out," he said. "I feel now the bank railroaded me."

He did file a lawsuit against First National in the early 1990s but dropped it after he came to believe he couldn't win. But his fight for redemption was far from over.

"I don't want revenge; I just want justice," he said. "I want back what is rightfully mine."

Hermann Winkelmann never stopped believing he would one day reclaim his place among Lakewood's business elite and cultivated a friendship with the owner of The Castle "because deep down I know it will come back to me someday." He viewed his return to prominence not as a possibility but an inevitability.

"I have time, it will come" he said optimistically. Sadly for Hermann Winkelmann it never would.



Who Was Hermann Winkelmann?

By most accounts Mr. Winkelmann was a kind and charitable man and remained one even as his own fortunes fell. An April 1975 letter to the editor praises him for treating 40 mentally or physically challenged children to music, a magic show and sumptuous meal at his restaurant.

Even as he fell on hard times he continued to be concerned with the well being of others. During a visit to Tent City a family member noticed the coat he had previously brought him was gone. Mr. Winkelmann had given it to a resident he felt "needed it more."

In his glory days he was a familiar figure around his restaurant, introducing himself to customers and checking on their satisfaction. Regulars describe a man of class and culture whose genuine warmth brought them back as much as the cuisine or ambiance.

Hermann Winkelmann was not afraid to take on new, often difficult, endeavors. He learned to speak several languages, developed enough rudimentary legal skills to represent himself in court and even ran for Congress. The modest support he drew is irrelevant next to the bold spirit he exhibited by doing so at all.

In an open letter to Congressman Chris Smith he challenged the incumbent to a debate. Always a gentleman he praised Smith for his work in office and

promised to "refuse to engage in any mudslinging or shouting matches." Whether Smith accepted the challenge of the long shot candidate is unknown.

To some he was a hero of the dispossessed, an honest man fighting for what was rightfully his. To others he was a colossal nuisance, a man who never took responsibility for overextending himself financially and chose instead to fight a war he could never win.

With locals though he remained popular, becoming an almost cult-like figure not afraid to speak his mind regarding the social injustices he felt led to his downfall. One contributor to his online obituary states flatly that he would "miss seeing Hermann and his little protests against Lakewood corruption."

Mr. Winkelmann was held in high regard by family who eulogized him as "a jovial and gentle soul and man of great integrity whose giving knew no bounds." His influence on son Christoph was profound.

"He was a great man who taught me principles and hard work" he said. "I admired him."

Not every account is so rosy. Research did uncover a few individuals with less complimentary opinions. A site called Ripoff Report includes the accusations of one man who claims to have loaned over \$4,000 to Winkelmann without being reimbursed.

And a May 2008 incident involving Brick Police accuses him of DWI, obstruction, making a false report to a 911 operator and aggravated assault for trying to bite one of the responding officers. The accuracy of these incidents can not be fully determined yet their existence does cast some shadow across Mr. Winkelmann's reputation as a man of high moral fiber and personal ethics.

Such findings, however, pale in comparison to the overwhelming number of tales of kindness, humanity and generosity he demonstrated throughout his life. By most accounts Hermann Winkelmann's heart remained open on even the darkest of his days.

A Memorable Man

I spoke to a wide range of people who had known Mr. Winkelmann. While many talked freely those closest to him were hesitant. Longtime friend and legal advisor John Gelson offered little but his feelings were quite clear despite the brevity of his reply.

"He was a great man," said Gelson.

Some knew him professionally. Businessmen, area historians and civic leaders used words like polite, professional and cordial and showed substantial respect for a man who had built such a thriving enterprise from the ground up.

Others came to know the second incarnation of Hermann Winkelmann, the odd man sitting outside his decaying former empire. Those who stopped to engage him were often surprised to find not an alcohol addled miscreant but a gracious man who believed he had been cheated out of the just rewards of a life of hard work.

Georgian Court alum Nancy Privitera often spotted him outside The Chateau Grand on her way to school. One bitterly cold day she felt compelled to stop and check on him. It was an encounter "that made a forever impression in my heart."

He freely shared tales of his life and made comments suggesting an honest man who had been cheated by unscrupulous bankers and a corrupt Lakewood hierarchy. Other comments however stretched the boundaries of believability enough to call into question his credibility and competence. Winkelmann told her the "Jewish Mafia" had run him out of business and "Lakewood turned their back on me."

While she had some doubt about his clarity Nancy had known about his sincerity, calling him "very sweet and genuine." Before parting he invited her as his guest to the grand opening of his new restaurant, a pipe dream perhaps but a sincere invitation just the same. As with so many who met Mr. Winkelmann she walked away with a soft spot in her heart for this sometimes maligned and misunderstood man.

Who Is to Blame?

While Mr. Winkelmann does hold some responsibility for his downfall much of the blame falls squarely on First National.

Winkelmann was guilty of continuing to borrow when it was clearly time to

slow down. His devotion to the Bavarian Village led him from the sound ways that helped forge his story of success into a personal crusade to see it completed. He disregarded the caution advised by other lenders for the sweet talk and fast money of First National.

He also made the mistake of closing the liquor store and butcher shop for renovation during the expansion, halting the cash flow those businesses generated. It cost him further when many of his regulars found other places to purchase meats and spirits and did not return once renovations were complete.

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Out-of-control spending also hastened his downfall. Mr. Winkelmann shelled out \$125,000 for a smoker to make sausages, \$60,000 for a shuttle bus from televangelists Jim and Tammy Baker and instructed his lawyer to acquire additional land for the Bavarian Village.

At Christmas 1988 he bestowed expensive gifts on family, treated employees to large cash bonuses and even gave himself a \$20,000 bonus. Soon after his family decided to seek professional help for their out of control patriarch, leading to his disastrous encounter with the mental health care system.

Even loyalty to staff contributed to Mr. Winkelmann's ruin. Always generous, he defended his decision to retain higher-salaried employees rather than seek cheaper alternatives.

"Your labor force is your most important asset," he said at the time.

But such mistakes would not have been possible without a complicit First National. Their lack of oversight in the very loan they'd approved allowed him to drive himself ever deeper into debt, creating a situation even a savvy businessman like Mr. Winkelmann could not overcome.

A 1991 *Asbury Park Press* series on the bank's collapse documents a pattern of reckless banking many insiders found shocking. The bank doled out sizable loans without the final approval of their top lending committee. Customer files often lacked the necessary documentation to justify loans or receipts to monitor how the money was being spent.

"The vast majority of loans over \$1 million had no recent financial information in the file" said one First National officer. "It was a credit culture beyond comprehension."

First National's transgressions included giving \$4 million to a mobile home developer without confirming if the required permits had been approved and an Old Bridge nursing home where one of the principals was found to have used much of the money to spend months away on cruise ships. Millions of dollars disappeared into a nursing home which never got beyond the laying of a foundation.

One prominent area banker suggested the ambition of First National's top brass was behind their aggressive pursuit of commercial loans, calling them "a small country bank that wanted to grow and didn't pay attention to what it was doing."

"No one had an eye on the store," he added.

In Mr. Winkelmann's case this pattern of irresponsible banking is clearly evident. Every other bank he approached was given the same feasibility study and financial projections and none thought the project was a good idea, for either party.

Yet somehow First National was willing to give the green light, not only to the initial loan but to requests for additional cash that helped put him in too deep. The original loan of \$3.5 million would more than double in just a few years.

"The bank loaned the restaurant more money than it could possibly afford," said restaurant controller Gary Canonico.

This free flow of money into already faltering investments would result in the suing of several First National directors by the FDIC for "breach of their

fiduciary duties," defined as "an obligation to act in the best interests of another party."

As Mr. Winkelmann fell further behind the bank extended him a \$400,000 line of credit, essentially giving him a second loan he could use to pay the first, a practice frowned upon in financial circles for obvious reasons.

Certainly Winkelmann didn't help by continuing to add to his debt but this is where "breach of fiduciary duties" comes in. The bank's legal obligation was to their client's interests. They were legally bound to use their expertise in finance to assure the continued well being of his business, regardless of his personal wishes.

The bank needed to remain pragmatic. That meant offering sound guidance, keeping payments at an amount reasonable for his income, monitoring the moves he was planning and pulling in the reins before his debt became too steep, none of which happened. Instead they continued to say "yes" to his requests, resulting in accumulation of the vast debt that would eventually sink him.

Had they advised caution or not allowed him to pile on additional debt things might have turned out better. With his outstanding business sense and the willingness of many creditors to work with him perhaps Winkelmann could've worked his way out of that much smaller hole. First National was hardly "acting in the best interests" of their client.

Blind ambition was the prevalent factor on both sides. First National was looking to move into the financial big leagues and was willing to break as many rules of responsible banking as necessary to achieve that goal. As for



Mr. Winkelmann a commitment to a dream bordering on obsession led him from his normally wise decision making into a personal crusade to see it through, with disastrous results.

Mr. Winkelmann's attachment to the Bavarian Village made him the perfect customer for the aggressive First National. Blinded by ambition, following his heart rather than his finely-tuned business mind and believing the bank was looking out for him rather than just looking to cash in on the easy money of the 1980s.

And when his dream, and all he had worked to build before it, became increasingly threatened the bank disregarded their legal obligation and let him remain on his treacherous path. When the time came to guide him back they continued to loan without forethought, never stepping in to halt his financial suicide until it was their own hides they were trying to save. They were the enablers who provided the means of Mr. Winkelmann's demise.

A Lingering Mystery

The fall of Hermann Winkelmann is full of lingering questions. How does a man capable of building such a thriving enterprise end up unable to pay for \$3 worth of soup? The events that turned this successful entrepreneur and philanthropist into an insolvent man living in a tent remain cloudy and debatable.



To unravel the mystery consider the time frame in which his saga played out. During the 1980s a series of legislative decisions led to drastic deregulation of the finance industry, meaning greater freedom of operation for both commercial and savings banks. Suddenly free of excess oversight a climate of bold investing ensued, with many banks feeling empowered to spend more daringly.

It was a time when huge fortunes were being made by fearless entrepreneurs and the banks who financed them. So when an already proven businessman like Mr. Winkelmann walked in the door there was often less of a tendency to scrutinize the merit of his request and more of an impulse to say "yes" to what would likely be a profitable union.

One resident of Tent City told me of traveling to The Chateau Grand after learning of his death. He climbed to the roof to maintain a silent vigil for a man whose abundant humanity and undeniable charm had earned both his respect and affection.

But like all boom times the bubble would eventually burst, resulting in one of the largest fiscal calamities of the 20th century, the savings and loan crisis. Many unsuspecting customers paid a steep price for their financiers' reckless behavior.

Was Hermann Winkelmann one of those unsuspecting customers or did he simply get himself in too deep with his decision to expand an already successful enterprise? In the *Press* series he acknowledged "mistakes were made on both sides." But those feelings would change and he came to see himself as a victim of both a fraudulent bank and corrupt Lakewood bureaucracy.

By the time First National began to pressure him the initial loan of \$3.5 million had ballooned to a whopping \$7.3 million and he was saddled with \$90,000 monthly payments. How fair a shot he was given at satisfying that loan remains as nebulous as any of the circumstances of his downfall.

His mental health issues are also tinged in shades of grey. While many doctors agreed with the bipolar diagnosis others weren't so sure. The physicians at Cooper had told him he "was not a sick man, just a troubled man." In the 2009 article Winkelmann suggests the prescribed medications were more harmful than beneficial to his state of mind.

Did powerful, mind-altering drugs offer genuine hope or did they exacerbate the problem, miring him further in mental dysfunction? This question is impossible to answer with any degree of certainty.

This uncertainty has inspired suspicion and conspiracy theories. People have expressed a belief his court battles were rigged, his death was not natural and his efforts at rebounding were quashed by an Orthodox Jewish community that would not tolerate a man who openly celebrated German culture. Thought provoking theories but unsubstantiated hearsay at best.

A good example of how such rumors can arise is found in the minutes of an April 2007 Planning Board meeting, where Winkelmann is mentioned in the correspondence section. Several other written correspondences appear in the minutes, the record stating the nature and specifics of each one.

But in his case no specifics are given, only a mention of "correspondence from Hermann Winkelmann." Was this an oversight in the recording of the minutes or were the contents willfully omitted? Could they be related to a court case against the town and if so does that speak to a larger effort to keep

the township's dealings with him out of the public record?

Provocative statements such as "I was forcibly medicated" only add to such sensational speculation. They conjure up dark and disturbing images that sow seeds of doubt and make the possibility of conspiracy seem somehow more plausible. Whether any of what transpired was truly that malevolent we can only wonder. In many ways the mystery of Hermann Winkelmann's downfall went to the grave with him.

Personal Thoughts

Through conversations with friends I came to understand their reluctance to speak. Mr. Winkelmann needed to be remembered as a man of integrity and philanthropy, what he once was and not where illness had sadly taken him.

While a number of factors contributed to his downfall two factors rise to the top of the culprits list. One would cost him the business juggernaut he had worked so hard to build, the other would take away his ability to live an even-keeled life.

His business was lost to a renegade bank so driven to profit it encouraged him to take huge financial risks. And when that bank fell from their reckless ways he fell with them.

His ability to live a stable existence was the victim of a vague yet undeniable illness that took away the sound judgement that had fueled his rise to prominence. While he did have lucid periods his illness was chronic and recurrent, sabotaging every effort at getting back a normal life.

These primary causes are likely connected. Without his illness the Hermann Winkelmann who was such a brilliant businessman would have seen the error of adding to an already bloated debt. Things would have never gotten so out of hand had he all of his faculties.

This was not just a case of a greedy businessman who took a huge financial risk that backfired and cost him everything. Mr. Winkelmann had passion for his domain, an unwavering belief in his right to claim it as his own. He inspired affection and devotion in so many whose path crossed his.

One resident of Tent City told me of traveling to The Chateau Grand after learning of his death. He climbed to the roof to maintain a silent vigil for a man whose abundant humanity and undeniable charm had earned both his respect and affection.

I too found myself growing fond of this man I could never know. His story was relatable: The striving for a better life and the fear of losing the one you have. I would come to think of him as quite different from your typical shrewd businessman.

For many successful entrepreneurs losing a business is a bump in the road, a misstep soon forgotten when the next cash cow begins to profit. But for Hermann Winkelmann his business was more just than a source of income. Like a garden he had grown from seed he nurtured it and loved it and watched with pride as it blossomed before his eyes. For him the loss was devastating.

This lingering devotion shows him to be so much more than just a "Reagan Era Entrepreneur," an already successful man looking to ride the wave of deregulation to even greater fortune. While opening the Bavarian Village would have surely added to his wealth, I doubt money was ever the primary motivation.

Perhaps he envisioned a path to greater philanthropy. The Bavarian Village could be a place to again open his doors to handicapped children and the less fortunate, adding to an already impressive history of selflessness and community service.

He never lost his love for this place even after making the fateful decision to hitch his fortunes to that suspect bank. It was the legacy of his life and source of pride even in the sad twilight of its existence. Perhaps he found some satisfaction in the success he had keeping it standing while powers stronger than he tried their best to see it reduced to rubble.

In many ways the life of Hermann Winkelmann was reflected in that building. Rising out of common pine forest it would soar to amazing heights that were reflected in the opulence that once defined it and the festive sounds that once echoed down its halls.

But all of that would change, the opulence replaced by crumbling mortar, the hallways now deathly quiet. The final chapter would be unexpectedly sad and lonely final years and premature death, for both the building and the man.

It is unclear if Hermann Winkelmann was aware of the fraud being perpetrated by First National or how it could imperil his entire empire. It is also unclear if he was taking advantage of the bank's lack of oversight to enhance his own life, as some customers were doing.

The warning signs were there all along. The denial of his request by other banks was a prudent choice made with much justification.

"If I was a restaurant owner or banker I would have never done that loan,

not in a million years" said Jeffrey Sussman, a real estate banker specializing in restaurant sales. His sentiments were echoed by many of Winkelmann's own advisors but would fall on the deaf ears of a man blinded by visions of Bavarian delight.

Did First National give him a fair chance to repay his loan and did they let it be known they could "call in" his loan whenever they chose? Did they give any hint of how quickly they would shift the pressure they faced from the government onto their clients?

Before attempting this venture Winkelmann's empire had little expense above operating costs and was in excellent financial health. How might've things turned out had he decided to forego his dream and just stand pat with his already bustling enterprise? Would his restaurant still stand proudly on Rt. 9 serving the same exceptional food that once packed the building?

Or if Mr. Winkelmann himself might still be around. He was only 67 when he passed and one has to consider how the strain of a 20-year battle against bankers, bureaucrats and the legal system may have contributed to his deterioration.

Mr. Winkelmann's estrangement from his family is a tender subject that could easily open old wounds for those closest to him so they shall be touched on only briefly. As the closest witnesses to his decline, they endured what had to be a most painful experience.

Some have suggested they "abandoned him" when things went bad, as both an ER nurse and advocate for the homeless told me.

Not so, says a close family member who calls efforts on his behalf "a two-decade-long struggle, fighting doctors, hospitals and a health care system not designed to care for someone with his condition." As things became more dire Winkelmann became prone to shouting and angry outbursts, making it increasingly harder for the family to stay together.

"He just became too hard to live with," says that family member, adding that despite their divorce and the blame he sometimes directed at his ex-wife she remained sympathetic and committed to finding a lasting resolution of his difficulties.

The uncertainty regarding his mental health was never whether he had an illness but rather the exact nature of it. While he did exhibit the manic moods of a Bipolar sufferer he was not prone to the depressive side of the Bipolar coin.

"He was manic or he was normal," he states.

This deviation from normal symptoms may have led to a trial and error approach and the troubling side effects Mr. Winkelmann claimed. Was the indiscriminate use of powerful, mind-altering drugs the impetus that pushed an already agitated and vulnerable man over the edge?

His comment about involuntary treatment also raises vexing questions of legality and professional ethics. However, such claims were greatly exaggerated according to someone close to the situation who suggest it may have happened once or twice but not to the extent his words imply.

As for his epic battles with town officials, clearly Mr. Winkelmann had a hand in creating that antagonism with belligerent behavior of his own. Some suggest these squabbles reveal his true nature, something less benevolent than the kind hearted man so many others assure us he was. I believe these incidents reveal not his true nature but stand as confirmation of the existence of mental illness.

Did he get a raw deal from Lakewood? Did they "turn their back on him" as he once said? Was there substance to his comments or were they merely the unfounded ramblings of a man with less grasp on reality looking to place blame for his downfall elsewhere?

Who can say? Perhaps his harsh feelings for the town were rooted in disappointment. After years of giving back to the community he found precious few ready to step up when it was he in need of help.

At his core Mr. Winkelmann was a good man. He did right by many people, had gratitude for the gifts life in America had given him and willingly shared those gifts. Whatever changes in his behavior may have occurred, however angry and confrontational he may have at times been, can not diminish that.

In the case of the man claiming to have been taken for \$4,000 it is certainly possible some kind of informal agreement between them went unpaid. What is less likely is this was ever Mr. Winkelmann's intent. He was just not the sort to deliberately cheat an associate.

As for the circumstances of his death it would be irresponsible to speculate without verifiable corroborating evidence. Chronic heart problems and years

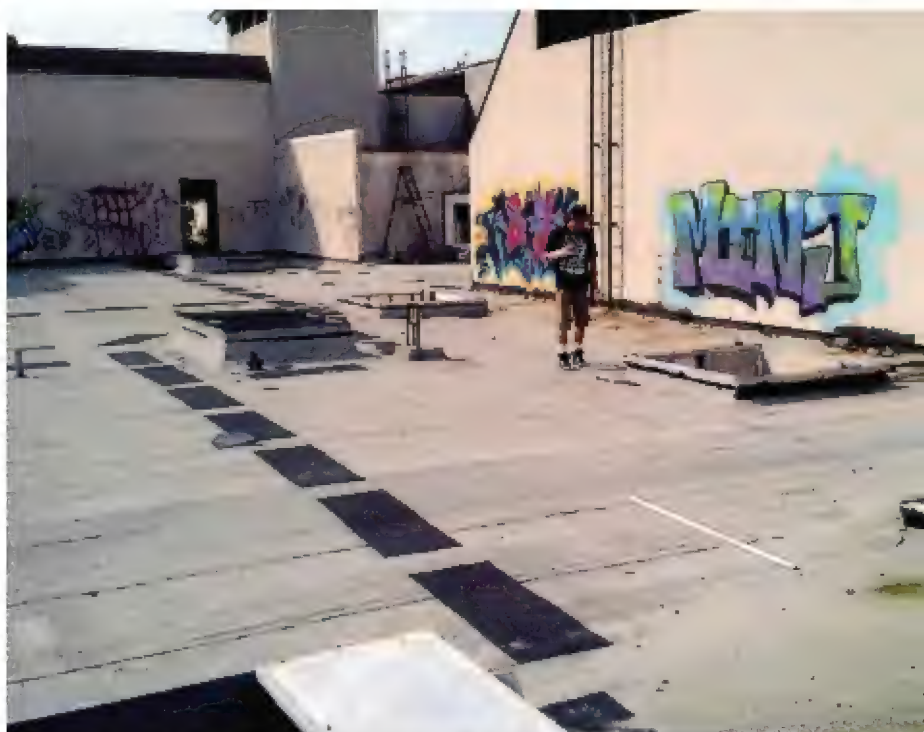
of an often stressful existence could just as easily have caused his death as the sinister actions some have hinted at.

Perhaps the biggest tragedy of Hermann Winkelmann's life was neither the loss of his business nor his mental health issues. Even estrangement from his family may have been less devastating than the inability to move on from those setbacks. When the time came to accept his loss and move forward he clung tenaciously to the past, driving him deeper into dysfunction and destitution.

A Legacy that Lingers

The Hermann Winkelmann story lingers as a sad piece of local history. It reminds us the American Dream has a dark side, that just as hard work and persistence can lift one to greater heights all can be lost so quickly, perhaps through no fault of one's own. It reminds us that even the American Dream has its share of skeletons in the closet.

One can imagine the sadness he felt as everything he had worked so hard to achieve was lost for good. It was surely pure torture for him to see vandals



deface the sad remains of his tattered dream or to sit helplessly by as stone-faced bureaucrats discussed how best to rid the area of his once magnificent palace, now an eyesore. Did he feel swept aside by a bureaucracy no longer concerned with a man who had once been one of the most esteemed members of the community?

There is a common theme to many ghost stories: A tragic soul unwilling to let go of a time long past. Hermann Winkelmann never fully moved on from his loss and it is easy to envision that loss following him into the afterlife. Could his spirit linger at the site of his former domain, unable to accept the death of an American Dream built so long ago on toil, sweat, opportunity and vision?

Whenever in the area I find myself drawn to this place yet unable to pass without looking over in sadness. With the man who turned a modest patch of pine trees into one of the finest German restaurants on the East Coast now long gone, it sat hauntingly still, staring silently out of shattered glass with a mixture of pride, sadness and defiance.

Despite efforts to raze the Chateau Grand and redevelop the property it stuck around for years, as if the grounds itself had taken on the tenacity of its former owner. It finally succumbed to the wrecking ball in May 2014, making way for a Kosher market.

As the new establishment becomes part of the Lakewood landscape memories of Winkelmann's and the Chateau Grand will fade from the collective conscience of the town. For now it remains an open wound. It quietly reminds us of a success story gone horribly wrong and the man who saw the American Dream realized, only to lose it in a manner so cruel and unforeseeable it would haunt him for the rest of his days.



THE BROOKSBRÆ BRICK COMPANY

The Brooksbræ Brick Company located in Pasadena was incorporated in 1905 to manufacture bricks for the Adams Clay Mining Company. The mining of clay started in the 1850s and soon became a profitable venture. The Brooksbræ site when built was state-of-the-art, ready to produce thousands of brick per day, but it is doubtful the factory ever opened as its owner, William Kelly died and his estate was frozen. The building was left for litigation that took years to settle.

In 1915 railroad strikers for the Central Railroad (which happens to run alongside the factory) tied up the rail line and the managers of the railroad could not ease the tensions of the strikers. The Brooksbræ agents decided to send a



PHOTOS: © R. LUBISCHER <https://www.flickr.com/photos/surreal-journey/>



caretaker to stay at the factory to look over the property. He and his wife lit a fire in the stove to stay warm and went to bed. The house soon filled with smoke due to the caretaker not checking the chimney flue. In a few hours the house was in flames and both of them perished in the fire. It was later determined that there was no foul play involved but rumors started that the striking railroad workers set the house on fire.

By 1918 Kelly's will was settled and the property was allowed to be sold, but by then the factory had already started to fall into ruin. There were rumors that it had burned down, but that's not the case. Years of cold winters and hot summers eventually made the walls collapse.

The site is located off Pasadena Woodmanse Road in Manchester Township.





LEGENDS OF BROOKSBRAE

Rumor has it that a man raped a young girl in the factory and then when he realized what he had done he killed her and set the place on fire with him and her dead body still inside. It's also said that this bus driver once took a bus full of kids back there and killed them all, however the bodies were never found and the old school bus has since been removed. Now it just stands as ruins full of graffiti. Sometimes locals go mudding back there and its common for teenagers and young adults to go back there and smoke or drink. I know plenty of people who go there for fun and a few friends and I have contributed to the graffiti there. However, it is constantly being done over. -Baylynn Galante

From e90post.com:

Only later did I learn "the rest of the story" of the Brooksbrae Brick Factory. It had been in operation only briefly before the death of the owner created a complicated legal situation, which left the plant idle. Years went by and then, on October 16, 1917, things went horribly wrong. An Austrian emigrant named Gildo Plazziano was serving as watchman for the facility. He had befriended 12-year-old Hannah Chattin, who lived with her parents nearby, and she had gone to his simple cabin that morning to help him paper the walls. Later, Hannah's father and brother saw flames coming from the cabin and rushed there, only to observe the bodies of Hannah and Plazziano lying together on a cot in the midst of the fire. According to contemporary newspaper accounts, "The [police] supposition is that the man attacked the child and then, realizing the enormity of his crime, had killed her, set fire to the shack, and then committed suicide." The fire spread to the factory, quickly destroying it. The local coroner (who was, himself, charged with murdering his wife in 1905) was not able to determine the cause of death, and exactly what happened that fateful morning has never been determined. -Rick F.



A GHOSTLY MYSTERY IN PASADENA?

by Scott Wieczorek

The New Jersey Pine Barrens can be frightful at night, whether from their eerie darkness and solitude or from the disembodied souls said to be haunting them. Rising from the desolate forest floor, in a place called Pasadena, are the ruins of the failed Brooksbrae Brick Company factory. It was the scene of two mysterious and tragic fiery deaths. According to local legend, the ruins are cursed and haunted by the ghosts of those claimed by the fire. Two spectral forms can be found at the scene of their demise, unaware of their passing from an earthly existence.

During my research of the factory, I happened to uncover this amazing little legend. I was no stranger to the ruined factory, and so my interest was piqued regarding the validity of a haunting at Pasadena. My research found that indeed two individuals had perished at the factory, but it also revealed a bit of a mystery. Another part of the legend claimed the two were actually victims of robbery and murder at the hands of some drifter and that the fire was set to cover the crimes. I decided a deeper investigation of the matter was warranted.

What I found was that the tragedy took place in 1915 and that the victims were named Jonas and Katherine. They were Polish émigrés who were staying in a house owned by the Brooksbrae Company. The factory had been inactive for several years and Jonas was hired as the factory caretaker. However, he did not always stay in Pasadena, but at his home in Philadelphia. The couple moved out to Pasadena in the late summer of 1915 in order to safeguard the factory against vandalism and foul play. Several days before they arrived there was a strike involving a number of immigrant railroad workers. The factory had been the staging ground for a group of strikers to collect and impede the commerce along an adjacent branch of the New Jersey Central Railroad. However, due to the prejudices of the times, the Italian immigrants were disliked and feared by the locals. Railroad management had tried unsuccessfully to resolve the situation through arbitration and so the owners of the Brooksbrae factory sent Jonas.

That particular night, however, was uncharacteristically bitterly cold. The

couple, in their mid-sixties, set a fire in their stove and headed to bed. However, they never awoke. During the night, the house burned to the ground. The charred ruins were found the next morning when workers arriving to work at a nearby cranberry bog noticed a plume of smoke rising into the sky. They sent for help immediately, but all that could be saved was the foundation.

A newspaper article from the *New Jersey Courier*, dated September 17, 1915, gives two angles on the fire. The first was a verdict given by the State Trooper who was first to the scene, who declared the fire accidental and likely caused by a clogged flue or chimney. The locals, however, never accepted this as the cause. Instead, they blamed the tragedy on the immigrant railroad workers and allegations flew regarding foul play and robbery on the part of some nefarious strikers. It was believed that Jonas and Katherine possessed a good quantity of money. And since the money was never found during the initial police investigation, it was surmised that they were robbed, murdered and burned to cover the crime. The police, after a second investigation, insisted that the fire was accidental and held to their interpretation of a clogged flue or chimney.

Accidental fire may have been the official report, but the locals were still able to have their final say. They maintained their tale of foul play, which was eventually recorded by New Jersey folklorist Henry Beck in his book *Forgotten Towns of Southern New Jersey*. Later, another New Jersey folklorist, William McMahon, continued this oral tradition in his book *Pine Barrens Legends Lore and Lies*, and added new stories of ghostly encounters at the factory.

So what really happened that night in 1915? No one will ever really know. The official death certificates, on file at the Ocean County Surrogate's Office, hold to asphyxiation as the cause of death. But the locals are firm in their belief of murder and robbery. So the mystery does and probably will remain unsolved. Perhaps the answer is out there somewhere. Perhaps the truth simply died with Jonas and Katherine. Perhaps their ghosts hold the key to unlock the mystery. Whatever the case, this is an intriguing ghostly mystery of New Jersey's past.

CEMETERY SAFARI

DISCOVERING A NATIVE AMERICAN BURIAL GROUND

Jeff Stoveken runs *Sussex County Excursions* and his crew have been documenting the east/west Jersey line which was set with engraved rocks hundreds of years ago. We think they have discovered something they weren't expecting.

Continuing our ongoing quest to determine exactly where the east/west Jersey line lies through Sussex County, my friend Dan Tassey and I met up on Mountain Road in Walpack on a Sunday morning. To approach this area on the side of the mountain we decided to follow a creek that the line appears to cross. It was a dismal and somewhat colder day for June, but we could still admire the large waterslides and little spas that made up this tributary to the Flatbrook below. We followed a very old woods road that was more of a trail at this point but may have been related to the old dams we noticed on the way up.

As we neared the general vicinity of the line we came across a heap of stones. It resembled other piles of rocks that we believe were used to mark the line, but seemed a little too far west. Checking our map, we saw we were not



there yet. I decided to check a couple historical maps and when I plotted our location it put us directly on the line. So we photo-documented the pile of stones and headed a bit further east. We hadn't walked far when we saw a couple larger piles of stones. Then we realized that we entered an area with many piles of stones. These piles were much larger, a couple feet high and maybe 10 feet long. I guessed there were around 20 of them and I had no idea who put them there and why. As we walked around we kept finding more and we were both pretty much baffled. We saw nothing else in the area except for a short section of a crooked stone wall. At one point I thought they could be some type of an old crude burial area. But it was a morbid thought and I was trying to come up with another reason for these rock piles.

After taking some pictures and talking about what they could be, we both came to the same conclusion—that it could be a burial ground based on the size and shape of these mounds. I'll speak for myself when I say I know nothing about early burial grounds or Native Americans but I just couldn't get away from the idea. One thing Dan pointed out was the only stone wall we saw in this area and how it was not particularly straight. He said it appears to be a snake wall and it only stretches about 30 yards or so along the eastern border of this small site.

We went on to finish our exploration of the Jersey line and stopped here again on the way back for one last look around. As I went to set



our compass bearing to walk back down, Dan looked to go in one direction and I looked to go in a slightly different direction. We stopped and compared them and as we started off again it still appeared that we were off course. We put our compasses next to each other and saw how each other's varied, yet we were using the same exact ones. We finally decided to walk in the general direction because we knew our way out but we just wanted to follow the line. A little while later we referred back to our compasses and our course was the same again. We couldn't understand what happened back there but at least now we could follow the Jersey line back down the mountain.

About a week later we decided to revisit that site and see if we could make heads or tails out of it. So we hiked out on at Sunday morning with plans to measure everything out, get a count of the mounds, and see if there was anything nearby that we could relate to it. Here's what we found:

This site is 90' x 90' square.

The average stone pile was 6 feet in diameter, the largest was 7 feet and the smallest were 5 feet.

They vary between 3 and 4 feet in height.

We found no evidence of farming or early industry in the immediate area.

The site was close to the edge of a bluff near the creek.

There appeared to be a set stone on the top of each pile.

We numbered 30 such mounds and estimate there could be 8 to 10 more but they were harder to make out.

We filmed and photographed the area before we left.

Later on that day I decided to see what I could find out about Native American burials in early Sussex County days. I referred to my 1915 book called *Indian Habitations in Sussex County New Jersey*. I came across two interesting descriptions. It seems that some bodies were buried in a flexed position with the knees drawn up close to the chin. The bodies were covered with great piles of stone. In addition, Cairn-burials were a mode of burial where large masses of rock were piled on top of the dead in lieu of the ordinary interment.

Dan concluded that the "S" shaped wall along the eastern edge of this site was symbolic of the snake that the Indians used as an effigy.

He also noted that Indian artifacts have been found in our general area dating back 10,000 years. I am not superstitious at all, but we are both still baffled as to why our compasses would not point in the correct direction as we left those rock piles.

So did we stumble onto a Native American burial ground? It doesn't resemble anything we've ever come across before and it's certainly possible considering the French and Indian war affected this part of Sussex County even back in the 1750s.

-Jeff Stoveken, "Sussex County Excursions"



THE BANSHEE IN THE CEMETERY

Back in 2007 one of my best friends introduced me to an abandoned cemetery located off Lawrence Road, which is off Route 22 in Springfield by Lenape Park. The only way to get to it is to park behind a factory and walk up a steep hill. There you'll find a iron gate that has been rusted down over the years. Beyond it is a group of about 20 or so headstones.

The names have unfortunately been worn down over the years to only a few letters and numbers. I had tried to get information on the cemetery but I could not find anything.

We spent many years hanging out back there to drink while we were underage or to get high and we would scare each other out of fun, but there was always a sense of being watched, or not being welcomed there. We just sort of shrugged it off as we were used to the supernatural, but it was not until the year 2012 that we had a very frightening experience there.

We would usually go in a group of four or five people, but on this occasion it was just me and my best friend. We climbed the hill and were about to enter through the gates when my friend froze and I bumped right into her. I asked her what was wrong, but all she could do was point. I followed her gaze and saw, standing over one of the headstones, a woman as solid as you and I. She was pale as pale can be with long, flowing, pure white hair, and she was wearing a grey sort-of nightgown. She looked as though she was hunting for something until she froze, turned to stare at us a let out a high-pitched scream that I was sure was going to shatter our eardrums. She then disappeared in an instant! My friend and I both stepped back and fell down the hill; she sprained her ankle.

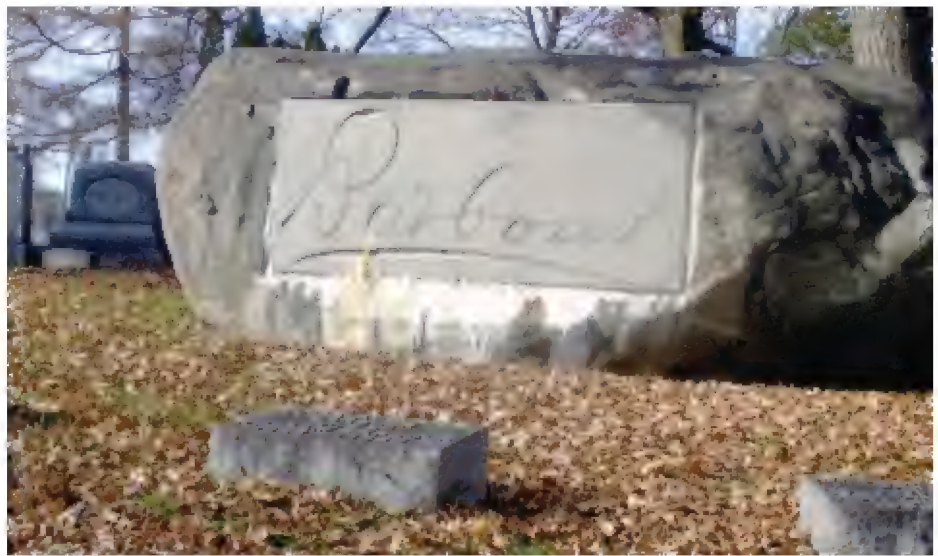
I helped her to the car as we debated what we had seen, eventually settling on a banshee, which makes the most sense. Since then we have not been back. I moved out of state for a few years then came back to Jersey in 2015 and decided to go back to the cemetery with a few friends but nothing really happened except for that "being watched" feeling. I started to date a boyfriend in 2016 and took him there for the first time. We walked around taking some photos but none were coming out clear. So we just walked around with our flashlights. I noticed one of the few headstones still left standing was leaning a little so I walked over to find that the dirt was recently disturbed like someone dug it up, or worse, something crawled out.

I shined my flashlight around to see all sorts of bugs crawling over that one headstone. I tried to get a closer look but my boyfriend was freaking out because we were starting to hear a low, whistling sound which reminded me the night of the banshee, so we took off.

I've been back a couple of times but I cannot get myself to go all the way up the hill. I always feel as though I'll never come back again.

I tried to do some research on Lenape Park itself but could not find any mention of a cemetery or if a specific family owned property in that area. I would like to know if anyone from *Weird NJ* has information about it. I would appreciate any answer that can be given. -AJ

AJ: It's the French-Richards Cemetery, located off Diamond Road. It was established in 1624. Although it was not maintained for many years, volunteers and Eagle Scouts are clearing debris and trying to fix the headstones. Local nurseries have also donated shrubs and trees to plant. The cemetery even has a Facebook page: Historic French-Richards Cemetery. We're sure even the banshee would appreciate the place being spruced up! -Eds.



CEDAR LAWN CEMETERY

Weird as it may seem these two photos show that weird people are still among us at the Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Paterson.

The Barbour family plot shows an enormous rock that Thomas Barbour played on as a kid in Hildon, Ireland. It was moved from the NYC docks by a team of horses.

My sister and I used to visit the cemetery often when we found this guy in the bushes. The next time we went he was gone. -Bill Wright



Photo taken at the Cold Spring Presbyterian Church cemetery near Cape May by Mark Bizuga.



THE BORDENTOWN GHOST TRAIN

Bordentown has some unique railroad history. The John Bull, one of America's original steam locomotives, may have first chugged out of Bordentown in 1831, but we actually have a modern "Ghost Train" that still goes by... Today the historic Camden & Amboy tracks are mostly ridden by commuters, but the rails are leased at night for commercial freight. Apparently there is a lonely factory somewhere up the line that still gets a delivery by train once a week. The train passes in the dead of night, but the people who live nearby probably know its schedule by heart. It randomly blows loud horns and whistles that jump them out of bed! It's seen so infrequently but heard so often that it's known locally as the "ghost train." You can reach out to Bordentown Walking Tours (www.bordentownwalkingtours.com) for more info. The old tracks are a stop on the tour. -Mark NP

I'm always visiting family members that have passed on and are buried in Hillside. Yesterday I was wandering around the cemetery and noticed what looked like a tear on the angel statue. The angel is holding a baby. -Carolyn Birardi



Nick Beef's Die-Namic Duos: Bar Bop in Glendale Cemetery, Bloomfield. -Nick Beef



BORN TO DIE

Here you go, have fun with this in the magazine... it's an oxymoron located in the Cedar Lawn Cemetery, Paterson, NJ. -Todd Hollritt



BETTER BED THAN DEAD

Sadie gets a good night's rest at Cedar Lawn Cemetery, Paterson. -Todd Hollritt

SYBIL'S CAVE UPDATE



John Brezinski wrote in to give us some updates on Hoboken's famous mystery murder spot in 1841, Sybil's Cave. Although you can't go into the cave because it's gated off, an up close view of the arch reveals it is made of styrofoam with a thin coat of cement of some kind. We're assuming the frame of the arch was constructed of more than styrofoam, but we're wondering how long this Hoboken landmark will survive the New Jersey weather.

United States Patent

Zanakis et al.

[19]

[11] Patent Number: 6,055,910

[45] Date of Patent: May 2, 2000

[54] TOY GAS FIRED MISSILE AND LAUNCHER ASSEMBLY

[76] Inventors: Michael F. Zanakis, Philip A. Romano

[21] Appl. No.: 09/088,006

[22] Filed: Jun. 1, 1998

[51] Int. Cl. F42B 4/06

[52] U.S. Cl. 102/347; 102/351

[56] Field of Search 102/353, 355, 102/302, 89/7, 42/55, 54; 446/399, 400, 403

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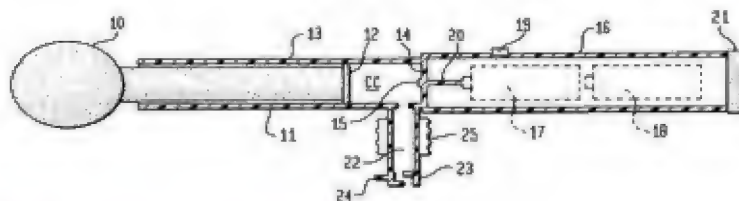
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Primary Examiner—Charles T. Jordan
Assistant Examiner—Dennis J. Buckley
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Haggood, Calamante Kall & Paulucci

ABSTRACT

A toy gas-fired missile and launcher assembly whose missile is composed of a soft head and a tail extending therefrom formed by a piston. The piston is telescoped into the barrel of a launcher having a closed end on which is mounted an electrically-actuated igniter, the air space between the end of the piston and the closed end of the barrel defining a combustion chamber. Joined to the barrel and communicating with the chamber therein is a gas intake tube having a normally-closed inlet valve. To operate the assembly, the operator places the inlet tube with its valve open adjacent his anal region from which a colonic gas is discharged. The piston is then withdrawn to a degree producing a negative pressure to inhale the gas into the combustion chamber to mix with the air therein to create a combustible mixture. The igniter is then activated to explode the mixture in the chamber and fire the missile into space.

9 Claims, 1 Drawing Sheet



NEW JERSEY INVENTORS

THE HUMAN GAS POWERED ROCKET

I was wondering if you ever covered the story of the patent for a human gas powered rocket toy obtained by two NJ guys in 1998. According to the patent, "To operate the assembly, the operator places the inlet tube with its valve open adjacent his anal region from which a colonic gas is discharged." We were getting mail at our address for a Michael F. Zanakis and when I Googled him I found this patent. My family tells me that one of the co-inventors may still be in the area. Mr. Zanakis was also convicted of trying to extort money from McDonalds when he put a lab rat tail in his son's french fries! Love that Google! -Ed La Duca



THE NEW CRAZE: "EMERYBOARDING"

I do this pose whenever I go to a notable place. I have over 150 photos in New Jersey and across the country. Some may consider it on the weird side. -Dave Emery

INVESTIGATING THE PARANORMAL IN TOTOWA

Sandra and Bob Bandov run Bearfort Paranormal based in West Milford. Here is a story Sandra sent us on a recent investigation.

We were recently called in to help a couple in Totowa, NJ who had caught some unusual footage on their security cameras. They are in the process of renovating a vacant house that was left to them over 8 years ago.

One of the cameras, which had been placed by an interior door leading to the entryway, has captured the sound of the door handle jiggling as well as a visual of the door actually opening.

Another camera placed in what was formerly a sitting room has captured the actual movement of construction materials. All of this activity seemed to start when the furniture and belongings of Laura—the former owner—were placed in the entryway. This really piqued our interest as object manipulation is quite rare and often denotes poltergeist activity.

We met up with the current homeowners, Nadine and George, for an interview and walk through prior to our investigation. They did not have many other claims, though George noted he has sensed a presence here. He has even felt a tap on his shoulder on more than one occasion. Their hope was to have the home cleared before their son and future daughter in law are ready to move in.

A friend had introduced George to Laura many years ago. Unfortunately, Laura's husband Victor had passed away in the 1960s and the house was in need of repair.

He took on some construction projects for her and quickly learned how stubborn and demanding she was. Sadly, he also realized she had no one to turn to. He began taking on more and more projects for her at no charge despite how difficult she could be. It wasn't long before George and Nadine were routinely checking in on her, taking her to doctor appointments and doing all of her shopping. This relationship went on for over a decade. We were so moved by how kind and compassionate they are.

One evening George had a very strong feeling they needed to stop in on their way home from an outing. They found Laura lying on the floor between her recliner and the kitchen as a pot of water boiled away on the stove. Laura spent some time in the hospital, and later in hospice care. All the while, George and Nadine were her only visitors. It was eventually decided the home would be left to them, as Laura had little to no contact with her family overseas. She was stub-

born and had a very strong will to live but it was becoming obvious the end was near.

They had been visiting with Laura the evening she passed. They excused themselves to quickly go out for a bite to eat, but their car would not start. They tried to start it repeatedly, but it simply would not turn over. It was as if the battery was completely drained. Moments later they received a call informing them she had passed away.

Nadine shared what little she knew about Laura and Victor's relationship with us before we parted. Laura had met Victor in England during WWII. They fell in love and she travelled here aboard the Queen Mary after the war. I can only imagine how scared and excited this young woman must have been to travel all that way alone to start a new life in another country. The couple settled in this home here in Totowa. Records show the house was built in 1929, yet they appear to be the first occupants for some odd reason. The two are now interred in nearby Laurel Grove Memorial Park.



We returned to the house after a short break and began setting up our equipment.

The air had changed; it felt stagnant and thick. We were a bit unbalanced. We chose to target specific areas based on the claims at hand as well as any spots we felt might be active. The primary areas we focused on were the interior front door and the sitting room.

We placed Energy Rods and REM Pods near the front door in hopes of documenting any changes to the static, temperature and electromagnetic fields. These devices light up and create various sounds when the field around them is broken.

We then grabbed some folding chairs and set them up in the spots where Laura and Victor's recliners once were. We placed several trigger objects around such as a few of Victor's airplane models, photos of Laura and the actual suitcase she used when she came to America. It was no surprise the spot where the camera caught the tools being manipulated is the exact spot where Victor's chair had been.

We also placed a REM Pod among Victor's belongings with static night vision cameras throughout the home. We often experiment with trigger objects spirits may be drawn to when investigating. It not only increases the activity, but we like to think it intrigues the spirit in some way. Perhaps it evens comforts them depending on the situation.

While we were setting up we spoke to Steve Lewis, our team medium via Face Time. He kept "seeing" a stack of beautifully written love letters, which is something Nadine had mentioned finding just hours before. I took him on a short tour of the house and he immediately focused on an older male standing in the doorway of the couple's former bedroom. One can only assume this was Victor standing guard.

It was quite warm, but the air seemed to thicken yet again; I felt rather dizzy as I descended the stairs. I knew Victor was there from the start. I could sense his presence the moment we walked in. We had mentioned it to Nadine earlier. She seemed a little surprised, but later commented that Laura routinely had conversations with him.

The whole mood in the house started to change as we selected some additional handheld devices we wanted to keep handy. Then suddenly the REM Pods started to sound and light up one at a time and then two at a time. We rushed to turn our cameras on and stood watching in amazement. I could not help but visualize the couple in spirit hand in hand. We wondered if all of this activity is focused on the front door due to the proximity of their remaining belongings or is there something more that we are simply unaware of. We also recalled Nadine telling us that Laura repeatedly told her husband to close the door. They almost seemed to be defending this area!

We went on to introduce ourselves and respectfully stated our intent. As we spoke it seemed to elicit further activity through the devices and then everything went utterly and completely silent. Bob cautiously approached the meters and they started to sound again, but now the REM Pod placed on Victor's chair started sounding as well.

We went on to explore more of the home all the while trying to engage our hosts in conversation. Our intention was to peacefully and respectfully guide these spirits to the next realm of existence. We even tried to appeal to their romantic side as we explained the home was being renovated for a young couple starting their lives together...bringing everything full circle, if you will.

Eventually all activity ceased and the energy in the home suddenly became flat. We decided to take a short break and contacted two of our good friends and colleagues whom we often work with remotely.

First we connected Tom Tongue; he heads a very well respected team by the name of Paranormal Investigations in Wichita, Kansas. We brought him up to speed on the case and started doing a bit of EVP work. He immediately had a very strong sense that someone was shot and killed in either the house or on the property. Tom continually asked if anyone else could smell fruit. I had noticed an orange scent earlier, which smelled a bit like hard candy. He likened the aroma to what one would encounter in a produce market. I mentioned this to Nadine later. She said Laura liked fruit and would let her know if she came home with a less than perfect specimen. She also had a painting of fruit on the wall as well as a bowl of fake fruit on the table at all times. Was this her way of making her presence known?

Medium Jeff Rezman from Chicago joined us as well. While Jeff specializes in Instrumental Trans Communication (ITC), he is extremely adept at crossing spirits and eliminating negative entities. One of the first things Jeff picked up on was the fact the spirits did not like us being there, "mainly the older couple." As it turns out there was a third spirit, a young boy who had lost his way some 150 years ago.



We opened a spirit box session and immediately realized we had caught some unwanted attention. After several minutes we turned the box off and at Jeff's suggestion Bob reached out to the spirits and persuaded them to follow Jeff's lead. Within moments Jeff had crossed Victor and Laura, who in the end left quite happily and hand in hand, I might add. He then focused on the boy who also returned home to finally be with his family.

It's difficult to comprehend what transpired next as Jeff was drawn outside to offer assistance to the many spirits in need who had come forward.

It's been said there are more dead people than living in Totowa with a staggering 85,000 dead vs. the town's 10,900 living residents. The town is also home to four cemeteries, Holy Sepulcher Roman Catholic Cemetery and Laurel Grove Cemetery being the two largest. The southernmost part of Laurel Grove Cemetery next to the Columbus Highway is supposedly built over a Native American burial ground.

Could the immense energy from the Great Falls in nearby Paterson also be powering so much of the unexplained activity in this area?

There are so many factors to consider. Could there be a trauma associated with the land? We know the Lenni Lenape tribe once inhabited the area before the Dutch settled it. The town also served as an encampment site for American troops during the Revolutionary War. Geologically speaking the land is rich in granite, basalt and quartz, which is a known amplifier.

Bearfort Paranormal is a NJ-based paranormal team. While we investigate all types of hauntings, our primary focus is on private home investigations. We welcome your inquiries. <http://www.bearfortparanormal.com>

THE FT. MONMOUTH HEAVINESS

I worked with my father for a number of years doing construction. We had many jobs at Fort Monmouth including a job at the old hospital—exactly what it was escapes me. But I do remember my father telling me to go down a few halls and through the double doors at the end because we needed more cove base trim for the job.

I thought nothing of it, but as I was walking there, down the last hall, my chest began to feel heavy, like lead weight heavy, a compression, but I knew I had to go through those doors to get the cove base or else he would be asking me where it was. As I passed through the double doors and into the old OR theatre, the compression was intense and so was the smell of iron in the air. The cove base was against the left wall and it took quite a bit of effort to bend down and pick up the few pieces that we needed.

As I was there I could tell that something profound was with me, but what it was, to this day I cannot say. If I had to guess, it was the spirits of those souls who laid on those cold tables, the ones who made it and didn't and those who conducted the procedures. I was in there for so long, transfixed and unwilling to move, that my father had to come and retrieve me. As I left the OR and the hall, the smell of iron dissipated along with the compression on my chest. I don't think I ever told him what I felt right at that moment, but I eventually did.

-Brian Gresh



FAMILY TRAGEDY CAN SOMETIMES LEAVE SPIRITUAL IMPRINTS

Can a family tragedy leave a spiritual stain or an imprint on the land in which it occurred?

The Caldwell Parsonage in Union, NJ was built in 1782, but it is not the original house. The original house was burned to the ground by British soldiers on June 7, 1780. This occurred after the soldiers had shot and killed Hannah Caldwell through a window in front of her two young children, a live-in nurse and a maid. The soldiers dragged her body outside into the street and looted the house prior to burning it to the ground.

Hannah was married to the Reverend James Caldwell, pastor of the Presbyterian church in Elizabethtown, New Jersey. He was an active partisan on the side of the Patriots, and was known as the "soldier parson."

James had warned Hannah that the British were in the area and that she should leave. She chose to stay instead believing that the soldiers would not harm her because she was the "lady of the house."

When Caldwell learned of the fighting in Connecticut Farms, he rushed to his home to find his dead wife—he held the funeral that afternoon.

James was then killed over a year later by an American sentry after he refused to allow him to inspect a package he was carrying. The sentry was tried and later hanged for murder. Some believe that he was in fact paid to murder James Caldwell.

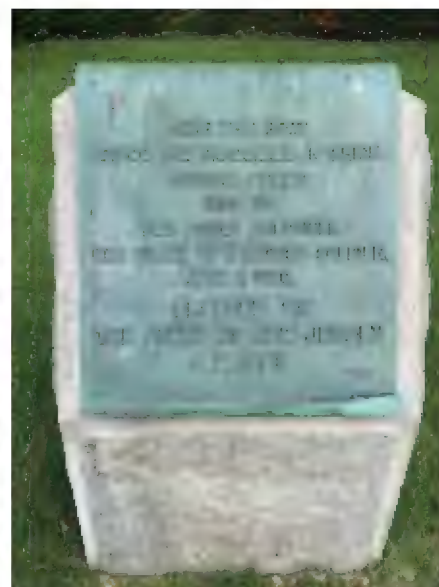
Are the spirits of Hannah, James and even the Caldwell children still on the land where everything tragically changed for their family?

New Jersey Paranormal was contacted by the director of the Caldwell Parsonage. There were claims of noises coming from the third floor and of hearing footsteps coming from the second floor when they were certain no one was up there.

"After several investigations spread out over a five-year period, we have had what we believe is intelligent interaction with spirits inside the Caldwell Parsonage building. We've captured voices on recorders answering our questions, we've gotten intelligent interactive responses with our equipment and a lot of it is in response to questions being asked of or involving James and Hannah Caldwell."

"Two of the most impressive intelligent responses that I received in the house was a repeat of three knocks after I asked whomever was listening to repeat the pattern. The other was when I was using a device in which spirits can choose a word from a preprogrammed database of 2,000 words. The three words chosen within the first five minutes of being in the building during this particular investigation were, "Reverend, James and Reverend" again.

So can a family tragedy and the resulting pain/anguish leave a stain on the land? Yes, I believe it can. *-John Ruggiero*



APPARITION CAUGHT ON CAM

I believe in ghosts/spirits and the Pines are no exception. This "half body" spirit is a total mystery to me. You can be sure I will be studying a lot more in this area.

Honestly I have no idea who or what it is. That was the only image. Nothing before or after. Those trail cams take photos of moving objects every couple seconds. Let's see what else lurks in the Barrens. *-Chris Johnson*

Pilot Says He Saw Odd Object Speed Over Coast at 900 M.P.H.

The object disappeared after the T-33 jet with Capt. Edward Ballard and Lt. Wilbert S. Rogers flying over Sandy Hook also witnessed the craft before it disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean. They chased the UFO for 30 miles (approximately two minutes).

"I pointed it out to Capt. Ballard," Rogers said, "who suggested we try to follow it. But we soon found it was no use. It was going too fast."

Ballard said they got as close as 8,000 feet from the object which kept a constant speed and didn't appear to be "running away."

This encounter may have been never been known had it not been leaked to the press. It made a major impression with the Pentagon and started the famous "Project Blue Book" report on UFO sightings. Before Project Blue Book, the UFO phenomena was in something the Pentagon called Project Grudge. The Pentagon then decided to suppress further releases from military bases regarding UFO sightings.

In an unclassified report from Project Blue Book, the Pentagon stated that on Sept 10, 1951 two balloons were released from the Evans Signal Laboratory. They were seven to eight feet in diameter and painted silver for radar tracking:

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900 MPH 'Disc' Chased Over N.J.

THE DAY THAT 900 MPH "THING" FLEW OVER NEW JERSEY

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The Fort Monmouth witnesses said they could not get a lock on the object with the radar because it was traveling too fast, above 700 mph. The world's fastest speed record for a jet at the time was 735 mph. The radar experts said they had never seen anything like this object before.

A T-33 jet with Capt. Edward Ballard and Lt. Wilbert S. Rogers flying over Sandy Hook also witnessed the craft before it disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean. They chased the UFO for 30 miles (approximately two minutes).

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"Experienced balloon observers state that when viewed from certain angles, they appear to be disc-shaped. At 11:35 EDST these balloons would have been at approximately 18,000 feet and would have moved to a position nearly in line with Point Pleasant and Sandy Hook."

From an Associated Press article at the time:

"I don't know whether it was a flying saucer," Lt. Rogers said. "But it sure was something I've never seen before."

The WWII Veteran from Columbia, Pa., was reminded that various units of the armed forces have knocked down reports of "flying saucers" and most have been explained as weather balloons.

"This couldn't have been a balloon because it was descending," he said. "And besides, no balloon can travel that fast."

The Fort Monmouth Incident has been researched and documented as one of the most important UFO sightings of the 1950s. You can read every report from the newspapers and Project Blue Book here: http://www.nicap.org/510910sandyhook_dir.htm

450 MPH Jet Trails 900 MPH 'Thing' Over N.J.

Mitchell Field N. Y., Sept. 11. Two Air Force jet pilots reported today they chased a mysterious, round flying object traveling at a speed they estimated at 900 miles per hour for 30 miles and couldn't catch it.

STORY REPHRASED

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Here's That Flying Saucer Again—2 AF Jet Pilots Lose It at 900 MPH

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Jet Chases Weird Object 30 Miles

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THE HOUSE WHERE "BORN TO RUN" WAS BORN



by Mark Moran

It's not all that impressive, and you probably wouldn't even notice it if you wandered down the street and weren't specifically looking for it. It bears no historical plaque, no clue at all to its landmark status in the annals of rock 'n' roll lore. But this humble one-story bungalow nestled between two much larger houses just one block from the beach in Long Branch is where a New Jersey musical legend was born — Born to Run. For it was in this two-bedroom cottage, located at 7 1/2 West End Court, that a 25-year-old Bruce Springsteen penned all eight songs that would be featured on his breakthrough 1975 album, "Born to Run."

Springsteen, who lived in the five-room house from 1974 to 1975, describes his time there in his 2016 autobiography, *Born to Run*, published by Simon & Schuster.

"I wrote 'Born to Run' sitting on the edge of my bed in a cottage I'd newly rented at 7 1/2 West End Court in Long Branch, New Jersey. I was in the midst of giving myself a crash tutorial in fifties and sixties rock 'n' roll. I had a small table holding a record player at the side of my cot, so I was just one drowsy roll away from dropping the needle onto my favorite album of the moment. At night, I'd switch off the lights and drift away with Roy Orbison, Phil Spector or Duane Eddy lullabying me to dreamland."

The house made headlines in the local papers in 2009 when Bob Dylan was wandering the streets of Long Branch and was detained by the police. Dylan was allegedly on a quest to find Springsteen's old cottage, which was then up for sale. As the story goes, Dylan was on a kind of pilgrimage to visit the former homes of some musical icons, like Springsteen and Jim Morrison, in an attempt to feel the vibes of the properties where they created some of their most inspired work. Rock 'n' roll fans have often made similar pilgrimages to properties with a Dylan connection to them, such as the "Big Pink" house in Woodstock, NY, where he recorded "The Basement Tapes" with The Band. Dylan, however, had mistakenly found his way to West End Avenue, which is two blocks north of West End Court, where Bruce's former bungalow can be found.

When the 68-year-old Dylan wandered into the yard of a home that had a "For Sale" sign on it, the home's occupants called the police with a report of a hooded, disheveled, rain-soaked, "eccentric-looking old man" in their yard. 24-year-old Long Branch police officer Kristie Buble answered the call and confronted the music legend.

"I asked him what he was doing in the neighborhood and he said he was looking at a house for sale," Buble told reporters at the time. "I asked him what his name was and he said, 'Bob Dylan'... Now, I've seen pictures of Bob Dylan from a long time ago and he didn't look like Bob Dylan to me at all. He was wearing black sweatpants tucked into black rain boots, and two raincoats with the hood pulled down over his head... I put him in the back of the car. To be honest with you, I didn't really believe this was Bob Dylan. It never crossed my mind that this could really be him."

The officer asked Dylan for identification, but he said that he didn't have any with him, that he was just walking around looking at houses to pass some time before that night's show in Lakewood, where he'd be performing as part of a tour with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp. The officer accompanied Dylan back to the Ocean Place Resort and Spa in Long Branch, where he told her he was staying. Once there, tour staff confirmed Dylan's identity.

The last time Springsteen's "Born to Run" cottage was on the market was in 2013, when it was listed for \$346,000. In 2018 I decided to pay the bungalow a visit for the first time. Fortunately I had far less trouble finding it than Mr. Dylan had. It's actually quite a charming little house, located on a shady street just a short walk

from the beach. Sure it's small, but as Springsteen himself once said in song, "From small things, mama, big things one day come." There didn't seem to be anyone home at the time, but as I approached the front porch a neighbor, who was just returning home at the time, called out to me asking, "Would you like me to take your picture with the house?" Sure, I thought, why not? So I posed on the porch for a quick pic in front of the screen door (perhaps the very screen door that slammed as Mary danced across the porch like a vision as the radio played?) The neighbor, whose name was Joe, said that Springsteen fans stop by the cottage all the time, just to take a photo and then be on their way. When he first moved in next door, he said he had no idea what all the attention to the house was about, so he actually had to ask one of tourists what their interest in it was. He told us that the current homeowners rent the house to a college student who lives there. "Nice young kid," Joe said, "but I don't know if he has any idea of what the house's history is, though."





John Corio and Bruce Springsteen.

time? Vacationing on his private yacht? Partying with supermodels? Locked away in a mansion and attended by sycophant servants? The answer is no, or not yet anyway. Bruce Springsteen spent his free time during the summer of 1983 bar-hopping in his home stomping grounds in Monmouth County and playing in a local softball league.

Springsteen had joined the league in 1977 and (tour schedule permitting) was a regular member until the 1983 season. Throughout that summer, Springsteen's physical transformation can be noted, as he began to work out regularly. Perhaps Springsteen knew the intrinsic value of what he had in the can and figured that an even greater fame awaited him. Or maybe he had envisioned the cover of his forthcoming disc and was embarrassed by his skinny butt. Teammate John Corio, who was also a local musician and photographer fondly remembers these times.

"Those were truly his 'Glory Days,'" says Corio as we leaf through his scrapbook. "He was not only a important and humble artist, but a great friend," he continues. Corio had to be coaxed into letting us share his pic-

WHEN THE BOSS MAN WAS A BASEMAN

Photos by John Corio
by Robert Gilinsky

By 1983, Bruce Springsteen was already a household name. He had released his landmark album, "Born to Run." He had already been simultaneously featured on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*. He had "Darkness on the Edge of Town" and "The River" under his belt. In his last interview, hours before his murder in 1980, John Lennon praised Springsteen's work and cited his trademark retro sound as an influence on some of his own new material. Any one of these accomplishments would be sufficient for most hometown heroes. But there was something more looming on the horizon for this Jersey boy. During the summer of 1983, Bruce Springsteen was busy in the studio putting the finishing touches on "Born in the USA."

So how was this rock 'n' roll star spending his free time on the eve of the release of his commercial masterpiece, one of the top-selling albums of all

tures. "I don't ever want to come off like I'm exploiting these memories. One time during a game, Bossman joked to me, 'John, if you take one more picture of me I'm going to throw your camera onto the Parkway! Keep your eye on the ball and let's win some games!' He was just kidding because he was always eager to check out the pictures I took, but from then on I stopped bringing my camera to the games. After all, he wasn't bringing his guitar."

John Corio is the creator and guardian of a priceless swatch of rock 'n' roll history. Springsteen is sporting the famous red hat which was pictured on the cover of "Born in the USA" in many of these pictures. Corio also photographed Springsteen and many other noteworthy local musicians playing late-night sets in all of the great clubs along the Shore during the early 1980s. He was also on hand to photograph Springsteen's surprise record-release gig for "Born in the USA" at the Stone Pony in Asbury Park.

"Born in the USA" was the end of anonymity for the kid from Freehold. Even President Reagan earned a little rebuke from the Boss when he tried to capitalize on the hysteria surrounding the album during his reelection campaign. Everywhere, in every city of the world Springsteen could no longer walk alone in the boots of the every-man he strove to speak for. Hundreds of people old and young would mob him. A legend truly belongs to the world. Ballgame over.

All photos © 1983, 2018 John Corio. Used with permission.





SPRINGSTEEN OF THE SEA

Think you have to go to New York City's Great White Way to catch an up-close peek at legendary NJ rocker Bruce Springsteen? Well think again! All you have to do is gas up your car in Princeton, NJ, where you can have a personal audience with "The Boss." Okay, he may appear all green and a bit less animated than the Bruce you'll find on Broadway these days, but he's still life-size, has a guitar in hand, and seems ready to use it. So just what is this other Springsteen doing standing here at the side of a road in Princeton—and what is up with that cloak of sea shells he's wearing? Well, therein lies a rock 'n' roll tale of inspiration and devotion. Not Bruce's, mind you, but that of another New Jersey artist named Stephen Zorochin.

The sculpture of Springsteen, which is entitled *Sea Sea Rider: A Jersey Legend*, is the latest in a series of tributes that the artist has created in honor of Bruce. Zorochin, who grew up in Princeton and later studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York, admits to never having met Mr. Springsteen himself. So without having his subject pose for him, he created his first Bruce-related work in 2011 based mainly on video images of Springsteen performing. Zorochin was living in Manasquan at the time and created the bust, which he titled *Bruce Springsteen: Soulful Humanitarian*, and entered it in an Asbury Park sculpture contest. The work was sponsored by the Arts Coalition of Asbury Park and the Shore Institute of Contemporary Arts and was later displayed in Asbury's Kennedy Park.

The bust, which sat atop a wooden pedestal at the edge of Cookman Avenue, is a somewhat larger-than-life-size cement cast with a faux-bronze finish, wearing a red bandana as a headband. Its facial features are exaggeratedly large and bold. When some critics complained that the bust bore little resemblance to Bruce, Mr. Zorochin was quick to point out that it was not his intention to craft a perfect likeness of Springsteen, but rather his own interpretation of the man. As we all know, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and art is subject to personal taste. Stephen offered us this endorsement on his own behalf:

"I took the head into a concert that Vini 'Mad Dog' Lopez (the original drummer of the E Street Band) was giving in Freehold at the V.F.W. And I said, 'Excuse me, I'd like to show you something.' So I showed him the head and he said, 'Yeah, bring the motherfucker in here and let's display it!' And he really liked it, he said it was a beautiful likeness of The Boss. So I brought it in and we had it on display at the V.F.W. while he was playing his gig."

"Barflies from Asbury Park wanted to bust it up," Zorochin recalls. Though he has not publicly commented on this particular homage,



This sculpture of Bruce Springsteen, entitled *Sea Sea Rider: A Jersey Legend*, is the latest in a series of tributes from artist Stephen Zorochin.

Springsteen himself has bristled at the idea of other such tributes to him in the past. In 1999 there was talk of Bruce's hometown of Freehold erecting a statue of him. Sculptor William Dean Kilpatrick proposed the creation of a 10-foot-tall statue of Springsteen to Freehold Mayor Michael Wilson. The mayor passed the proposal on to the Citizens Advisory Council, which recommended to the Borough Council that the proposal be turned down because of the project's estimated cost of \$200,000. The statue never became a reality.

After the Town Council nixed the idea Springsteen addressed the matter in song during a live show at Continental Airlines Arena in East Rutherford where he performed his song "In Freehold" and added the following verse:

Well I read something in the papers a few weeks ago that was pretty funny. Seems the town council was debating whether to put up a statue of me in my hometown, but it cost too much money. Well I'd like to thank the Town Council, my friends, for saving me from humiliation by displaying the good hard common sense we learned in Freehold.

Stephen Zorochin's bust eventually left Asbury Park and went on a kind of tour for a while, being displayed at various locations such as Long Branch and Red Bank. It was next spotted in 2014 at Larini's Service Center and gas station at the corner of Alexander and Faculty Roads in Princeton. The artist had moved back to his hometown after Superstorm Sandy had destroyed his house and studio in Manasquan, and he brought the head of Bruce Springsteen with him.

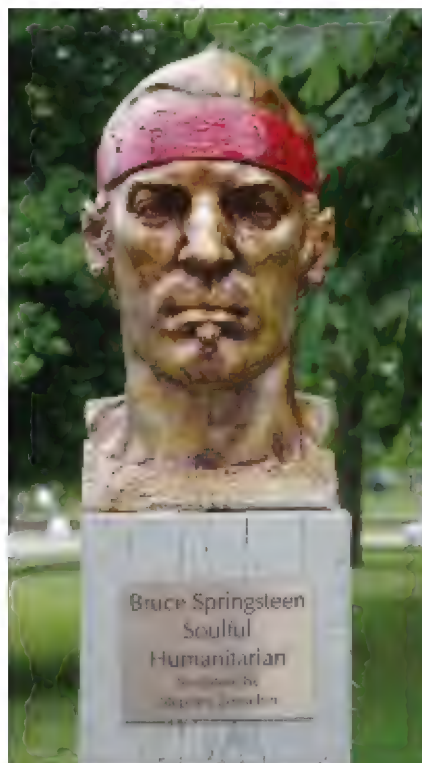
"I'm grateful to Ken Larini for giving me a location for the Springsteen piece," Zorochin told TownTopic.com at the time in an online interview, "Even though I'm sure he'd probably prefer Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons."

When Larini's went out of business Stephen approached another gas station owner named Gary Fowler, of Fowler's Gulf Station located at 271 Nassau Street about displaying the bust, and he was happy to oblige.

After reading Springsteen's 2016 memoir *Born to Run*, Zorochin was inspired to expand on his original concept.

"I was reading Springsteen's book last year and the man, at his core, is a beach bum," Zorochin said. "He's a beach bum by his heart and soul...The Jersey shore is in my blood, obviously it's in his blood. He's like the old man and the sea, he's like Poseidon. So I didn't want him in a leather jacket, I wanted him in a blanket of sea foam and seashells. This is what grounds this man."

So what started as a bust became a full-figure fiberglass statue of Bruce Springsteen holding a guitar, his body wrapped in a blanket-like cape encrusted with barnacles, bivalves and seaweed. Even the hand patina sea foam green tint that Zorochin rendered on the statue adds to its seafaring motif. Imagine one of those ghostly half-man, half-mollusk crewmen aboard the cursed Flying Dutchman in Disney's *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series.



The original bust of Springsteen was displayed at various locations in the shore area.

"Being a rock star is just part of who he is," Stephen has said. "What he's really about is the Jersey Shore. He wears the ocean."

Zorochin recalls reading in Springsteen's autobiography about how Bruce had spent part of his lean early days sleeping on the beach, under the boardwalk in a sleeping bag. The artist could relate, having lived by the ocean himself for a time and seeing people wake up in the morning and come off the beach wrapped in blankets. Inspired by the memory and the image, Stephen spent most of the winter of 2016 creating the new sculpture. It was unveiled outside of Fowler's gas station on April 30, 2017.

"I said fine, put it out there," Gary Fowler told *Weird NJ*. "It gets a lot of attention. People stop their cars and get out in the middle of the street, taking pictures. Everybody's curious, 'What is this? Who is this? What's going on?'" We asked Gary if he was a Springsteen fan himself. "Oh yeah, of course. I'm



a Jersey guy, you know?"

We spent some time with Stephen Zorochin recently at Fowler's Service Station where he waxed philosophically about the ocean, its healing properties and the transformative qualities it can have on the human psyche. "That's where the whole idea for this shroud came from," he told us. "If you look, you'll see that he's wearing a leather jacket under the shroud. I could have easily portrayed him in a rock 'n' roll personality. But I said 'No,' even though he is a big rock 'n' roll star, he's really like anybody else, with super vulnerabilities. And people really love it, they connect with it! If I had him standing there in a leather jacket I'm not sure that that would have happened. I really admire Bruce as a humanitarian. He keeps it real, there's nothing pretentious about him."



Close-up detail of the guitar.

ROADSIDE WEIRDSIDE



VISITING THE ABRAHAM CLARK ROCK

The Abraham Clark Rock is located behind a shuttered supermarket parking lot in the now-dated Roselle Shopping Center. It is a sizable sandstone boulder, reddish-brown in color, so typical of many of the old colonial tombstones or old churches that used to be constructed with the native New Jersey rock. The boulder has a natural point to its shape, perfectly intended for its intended task as a boundary marker, for on one face is carved the initials "AC," while the other side bears both "RC" and the still neatly chiseled date of "1737" positioned just below. While many a colonial marker stone has lost much of its detail to the harsh erosion of two centuries' exposure to the elements, this incised date remains almost pristine.

This distinct boulder was used as a boundary marker separating the properties owned by relatives Abraham and Richard Clark, but while our history classes taught us that Abraham Clark was one of the five signers of the Declaration of Independence from New Jersey, these initials corresponded to a pair of his family's earlier ancestors two generations prior. We often parked our bicycles and sat on the rock, pondering the fact that it had been there for almost 40 years even prior to the Declaration of Independence's announcement of the birth of our new nation. Sadly, I'd be willing to wager that most people who live in the Linden/Roselle area are completely unaware of its existence, despite the fact that it has now stood

sentinel in place for a remarkable 293 years, its obscure location probably contributing to its continued existence. -Fred Cassel



LIFE'S FULL CIRCLE (IF YOU'RE BEER)

Came across this funky urinal at Old Glory Kitchen & Spirits in Keyport NJ. You buy beer from the keg, own it for a while, and then return it to its home. -Reed Pitkunigis



THE BRIDGE TO NOWHERE AND WHY

I saw this bridge to nowhere along Stillwater Rd. (CR610) in Fredon Township, Sussex County. It looks brand new so maybe there is more construction to come, but right now it looks really weird standing there all by itself. -David Markunas



BIRD IN HAND IN GREENBROOK

If you're driving down Route 22 in Green Brook you might notice a hand approximately 10 feet high waving at you. Don't worry, you're not seeing things. I drive by Arthur's Plaza strip mall in Green Brook a few times a week and noticed this mysterious hand sometime late last year, so I decided to investigate. Past the Dollar Tree and Duck Donuts in the far end of the parking lot by Bonefish Grill stands a large metal hand sculpture that has been weathered to an almost wood-like appearance. A small trail of bird footprints are found on the metal base and a large red metal cardinal is perched on its pointer finger, like a cherry on an ice-cream sundae. After examining the piece, I found the artist's signature and date of creation written on its side in the metal: Dale Rogers 2017.

Dale Rogers is a metal sculptor from Massachusetts. According to his website:

Dale is proud to have his sculptures displayed in private collections in 49 states, Puerto Rico and Canada. In addition to these private acquisitions, he is actively expanding his reach into the public realm. He has always believed that art should be accessible to the public and should be an integral part of our every day surroundings. "It is important to add art to the landscape of public venues. Art triggers the imagination of its observers, encourages them to view the world differently, and stimulates conversation. It adds an extra layer for the public to connect with at any park, office building, common area or trail," says Dale.

I found a sculpture similar to the one in Green Brook in his catalog under the name "Bird In Hand." The one in the catalog is just like the one in Green Brook except it has two cardinals—one on the pointer finger and another in the palm of the hand. Out of curiosity, I went back to see the "Bird In Hand" in Green Brook and checked for a hole where a second cardinal would be located, and there was in fact a hole. I also found a second version of "Bird In Hand" in his catalog that has two crows instead of cardinals. If the Green Brook piece follows the name and there should be a bird in hand, then the bird in hand is missing. So I wrote to Dale Rogers and asked if the Green Brook version was a one-cardinal version or perhaps the piece had been vandalized. He didn't get back to me quickly, but when he did, he confirmed that there was a bird missing from the palm of the hand. Nonetheless, this sculpture adds a nice touch of culture to a mundane drive home. If you're driving by the strip mall on Route 22 in Green Brook and see a huge hand waving hello, don't just drive by, stop and take a look. -Nick "Quig" Clemente



NEW BODY OUTLINE ON ESSEX ROAD

There's a new body outline on Essex Road in Tinton Falls to go along with past legends! -Amanda Antipin



SOMETHING SPHINX IN EAST BRUNSWICK

I live near East Brunswick and I was traveling down Summerhill Road and these Sphinxes appeared on the side of road after an old barn was torn down to make room for some new homes. There are two and they appear to be made from cast iron. Not sure where they are from but they look heavy. They are located near the corner of Summerhill Road and Terry Lane. -Liam Coghlan





CROSSROADS TO NOWHERE

On Route 23 a mile north of Clinton Road at the Doremus Road intersection, crosswalks literally to nowhere have been installed. There are countdown boxes, painted walkways, and concrete landings that basically connect you to nothing. There are no sidewalks in this area, only roads. Nobody does or should be walking here. It is very bizarre. -Joe Vengren



WOOD EATS IN WOODBINE

Saw this munching tree in Woodbine.

-Dan Murray



Saw this little gem of randomness on Schoolhouse Road in Oak Ridge the other day.

-Kathy Finamore



MEMORIAL IN THE RIVER IN CALIFON

A "grave" curiosity I found literally in the middle of the South Branch Raritan River near Ken Lockwood Gorge Wildlife Management Area in Califon. It can only be reached by wading into the river. (The "death date" was my third birthday, which makes it extra-spooky to me. -Roman Gerus



S.S. ATLANTUS: GOING, GOING...

A photo (above) of the S.S. Atlantus taken in 1945 by Art Bink. The ship has now deteriorated into unrecognizable hunks of concrete, but here you can see the whole outline of the ship, including some davits normally used to hold lifeboats. The ship today, (right) photographed by Tim Smith in June.

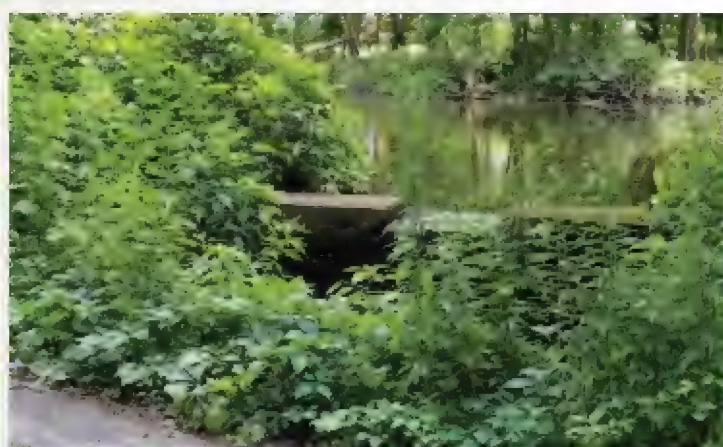
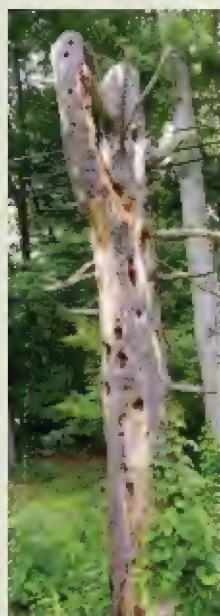




THE BOXES OF VOORIS (AND OTHER STUFF)

Voorhis Road in Morris County, not to be confused with Jason Voorhees, the main antagonist and centerpiece of the *Friday the 13th* movies, has several interesting features worth noting. It's a dead end that is less than a mile long but spans the border of two towns: Lincoln Park and Montville. Along the road are some interesting sights—a pond that seems to defy gravity as you drive past and under its waterline (due to a well-placed dam), a tree that is hungry for a house number, a determined woodpecker's masterpiece, a small abandoned home and some interesting mailboxes including the street's masterpiece known as The Behemoth Box. This mailbox is estimated to be over 12 feet high from ground to flag, weighs over 200 pounds of steel and can easily fit not one but possibly two average-sized humans inside. It's marked with a simple "Heartland" and no number. I am left to wonder what gets delivered here and by whom?

-Gabe Calemma



ON THE COVER

THE DAY THE CIRCUS LEFT TOWN IN WALL



PHOTOS BY LUVMAKEPHOTO

This past May New Jersey lost one of its truly iconic roadside landmarks: The Circus Drive-In, located on Route 35 in Wall Township. For the past 64 years the circus-themed restaurant had been a staple attraction for summer Shore goers vacationing in Monmouth County. The brightly colored neon sign featuring a deliriously happy clown has stood at the side of the road welcoming generations of beach-bound motorists en route to shore destinations like Belmar, Spring Lake, Sea Girt and Manasquan. But the seasonal business decided it would close its doors for good at the end of the summer of 2017, and the iconic glowing neon clown went dark forever.

For the past six-plus decades it was just like a scene out of the TV show *Happy Days* each summer at the open air eatery: car-hops bringing hamburgers, milk shakes, cheese fries, lobster rolls and crab cakes to cars in the parking lot, with music emanating from the car radios of convertibles on sultry summer evenings. Generations of first dates and summer romances took place here, with some leading to long-sustaining marriages. Customers who hung out at the Circus as teens in the '50s and '60s would return in later years with their children and grandchildren to find not much had changed—not even the menu. But now it's all just a nostalgic memory.

The Circus Drive-In was originally opened in 1954 by Richard and Barbara Friedel and their family, who ran the business up until 2004. At that time the diner was sold to the Kayal family, who ran the establishment for the next six years before selling it to Rich Rose and Charles Kavitsky. When the partners decided to put the Drive-In on the market in 2017, a groundswell of customers and former employees implored them to try to find a buyer



that would continue operating the business as a restaurant. There was even a grassroots "Save the Circus Drive-In" campaign launched by a local Wall resident, which garnered thousands of signatures on a petition for their cause. Others sought to have the Wall Township Committee designate the site as a "historic landmark." But alas, it was not to be.

The Circus Drive-In was sold in September 2017 for \$1.75 million to Rock Asset Management, a firm that owns various shopping center properties in the area. The new owners announced plans to build retail stores on the property. At that time, real estate agent Gerard Norkus told reporters that the iconic clown sign would probably stay in place and stand alongside any future development, though other mementos from the restaurant would be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

On May 9 of this year a small crowd assembled at the Circus Drive-In to bear witness to its demolition. At 8:00 AM a wrecker began tearing the red and white "big top" themed architecture apart and within 20 minutes the Circus was just a delicious memory. In the aftermath the town had to be vigilant and on the lookout for souvenir hunters trying to scavenge what meager memorabilia they could from the restaurant's ruins. The giant clown now stands in a vast empty lot, the painted smile peeling away from his sheet metal face, looking like a hobo that missed the last train out the day circus left town.



A SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL IN NEWARK

Weird NJ contributor Johnny Pages sent us a photo of a curious find he made recently inside the wall of a Victorian-era three story building located in downtown Newark. Johnny tells the tale...

"I was working for a construction company based out of East Orange at some mansion on Central Ave., at Washington Street in Newark. We removed an electrical panel in the basement and this pistol fell out. And, you know, it was very hush hush, no one could say anything. We kinda handed it around, see who wanted to take it—who wanted to say they had it? I didn't want to say I had it! I was new on the job and didn't want to cause a big scene by calling the cops or anything. Because then the job would have been shut down and I probably would have lost my job. So someone else took it, but I got a nice picture of it.

"Apparently the place that we got it from is now being renovated to be the new Alumni House for Rutgers Newark. I did some research on the house and there seemed to be doctors' offices in it dating back to the 1850s."

According to the Rutgers Alumni Association website: The new Rutgers University-Newark Alumni House is a 19th-century brick structure located in the historic James Street Commons neighborhood, and was likely created by William Halsey Wood, a prominent Newark architect. The building was originally designed to be a surgeon's office and residence. The building, just a stone's throw from the Newark Museum, is a symbol of the university's deepening connection to the city of Newark.

"As you can see in the photo," Johnny points out, "the pistol is loaded."

We wondered if the little snub nose revolver might have been hidden in the wall after being used in the commission of a crime, and asked Mr. Pages if he checked to see if all of the pistol's chambers were still loaded.

"There were bullets in two of the chambers, and I don't think anyone ever loads a gun with just two bullets. If this was found in Short Hills I would have said, 'oh, they only had two bullets,' but this was in Newark, so...you can use your imagination."

You can follow the continuing adventures of Johnny Pages at @pandalesbo and #iknewjersey.



PERSONALIZED PROPERTY

THE MANNEQUIN HOUSE OF NORTH BRUNSWICK

If you happen to be traveling along Washington Place in North Brunswick and stop at a red light at the corner of Route 130, take a look to the left and you'll see that you are being watched. Not by some nosy local resident peering through a window from behind a blind, but by the more than a dozen pale faces of the figures that congregate on the shady lawn of one particular house there. They stand leaning on lamp posts and against tree trunks, sit on the front stoop and side porch steps, they've assembled in groups on folding chairs and even in the car parked in the driveway of the home—all just watching. Some look kind of surly, with long hair, mirrored Aviator shades and cigarettes dangling from their lips. Others pose on the sun-dappled lawn decked out in high fashion garb, as if they are gathered for a photo shoot for some high-toned magazine. They are always motionless—unflinching, never twitching—and they are always there, rain or shine, night and day...watching.

You may have to do a double take to figure out what's going on here around this otherwise ordinary-looking house on this quiet suburban street. But if the light



"Traffic is heavy as hell around here, so originally I made some figures out of chicken wire stuffed with leaves, so it was like a silhouette. So it would look like a kid was kind of running into the road, hoping that people would see it at night and slow down. But it didn't happen."

doesn't change and you have a minute to puzzle it out, you'll realize that these shady looking characters are in fact all mannequins. Several *Weird NJ* readers contacted us recently asking us about this unusual, and to some, unnerving sight. They wanted to know what it was all about, who was behind it, and why.

Not knowing whose property it was where the mannequins were converging, we sent a letter to the house on Washington Place and a few days later received a call from Denise Luzack, who is the owner of the home in question. Denise invited us to her home, where she introduced us to her partner, Michael Calantoni, who she told us is the man behind the mannequins. We sat in their kitchen one day this past August and asked about their unique and curious collection of lawn decorations.

It all started about five years ago, they told us, as a way to try to get passing motorists to slow down as they drive through the neighborhood.



Mike explained: "Traffic is heavy as hell around here, so originally I made some figures out of chicken wire stuffed with leaves, so it was like a silhouette. So it would look like a kid was kind of running into the road, hoping that people would see it at night and slow down. But it didn't happen. Then I had a guy lifting two kids up into a tree on the side of the road like they were playing, you know? Then I made a couple more and thought, what the heck? I work at a party store and they have these plastic face-masks, so I started making the figures out of garbage and putting the faces on them. I put wigs on them and stuff I found at cheap garage sales, and made them out of garbage: plastic bottles, wire, whatever I'd find."

We told Mike that some of them looked so lifelike, they could easily be mistaken for real people from just a few yards away.

"Yeah, dogs will bark at them, every car with a dog that goes by, 'GRRRRR!'" Mike said. "I also have them in the car and I'll take them to work with me sometimes. I'll put one in the passenger seat and I'll put one in the driver's seat when I'm parked in the lot. And people will be out there taking pictures all the time with the car."

So what's the local reaction to the mannequins been like, we asked.



"Every second car that passes, cameras will come out," Mike said. "They'll slow down a little bit but not too much. People are just anxious to get down the road."

Dee added, "People either love them or they hate them. My niece moved to Georgia and a friend that she grew up with sent her a picture of this house and said, 'Oh, thank God they're not MY neighbors!' and she goes, 'That's my aunt's house!'"

To show how much the community has embraced the display, Dee told us about how last Halloween the church down the street had a scavenger hunt and included the Mannequin House as part of the first clue.

"Go to the dummy with the green hat and get your first clue," she remembered, "And the kids loved it."

Dee recalled another event. "I woke up one morning and the white mannequin with the dress was taped to my mailbox. I said to Mike, 'When did you put the girl out there, the one with the dress?' and he said, 'I didn't.'"

"Someone left the mannequin and there was a note pinned to her," Mike said. "She was fully dressed: jewelry, watches, hat, everything. And the note said, 'Can I live here? Signed, Monique.'"

We asked Mike and Dee if they enjoyed when people came by to enjoy their creation.

"Oh yeah," Mike said, "I'll sit in my car and have a coffee and I'll watch them. Every weekend I'll look out the window, I don't have TV, so I'll just watch them. Seeing like every third car go by and the kids going freakin' nuts! People stop all the time and tell me, 'The kids make me drive past here all the time, they want to see what's different.' I just love watching the triple takes—usually the high school girls are freaking out."

Aside from just general maintenance, Mike and Dee say the figures require little upkeep, aside from replacing clothes or wigs when they get ratty and weathered and maybe changing out a mannequin's head now and then.

As far as plans for the display's future go, Mike said he'd like to perhaps get involved in more animation of the figures through puppetry and maybe start a webcast to catch peoples' reaction to the show. So keep your eyes peeled when you drive by the Mannequin House of North Brunswick, because you never know when those figures will stop just watching you and might start waving at you, too!





THE DOLL HOUSE OF ELIZABETH

For over 30 years, my parents have added to their collection of front porch dolls. It started with one that my father wanted when I was maybe three or four years old. Since the porch has very large windows, he thought it would be cool to have a nice doll in the center waving at passersby. To him, it would be funny and sweet. My mom loved the idea. She's been a seamstress since the age of eight and loves making dresses. My parents are from Cuba where things were very difficult, and my mom was always big on those old-school dresses for little girls. She would make me dresses and outfits all the time. Over the years, my parents would think, hey let's get her a friend! So if they found another doll they liked, they'd add her to the collection. My mom would use either some of my old clothes or something she'd make to dress the dolls. She even got a mannequin and that's the "business woman." It's 30+ years later now and the dolls are still there.

I'm writing you guys because I want to know what I would need to do to feature the house in *Weird NJ*. There's a bit of a controversy surrounding the house and as the youngest of three, and the sentimental as hell daughter that I am, it's really bugging me that people just call it creepy and that the dolls shouldn't be there. The dolls have been at the house for over 30 years. They've always creeped me out. Except for the one doll, the original one. That one my dad got to kind of represent his daughter and I was still really young so she never bothered me. The others, even the mannequin give me the creeps but it just doesn't matter, it's nothing hateful or violent and it made my parents happy, they're not hurting anybody and if it hurts your eyes then um, look away maybe? It is just that simple.

I adore my parents. My father passed away in 2015 so now my mami is there without her guy to nag and the dolls, her sewing, her religion, and her close friends and family, we keep her busy. This pint-size Cuban crafty queen is pretty feisty, despite her failing sight, she's damn quick and witty. Wish I would have realized this about her earlier in life. She's a hoot.

I hope you guys can consider the house for an article in *Weird NJ*. My mom would flip out and have a love/hate for the attention. More love, she just won't admit it. But it would make her beam with joy and she needs some of that. I've told her about the "creepy" comments and she just laughs and says, "They don't need to look then!" She's right. But to call it dirty or that it needs to be taken down, blah, blah... come on. They're not hurting anyone. Sometimes I feel like showcasing them right at the edge of the driveway and REALLY freak people out. Frightened by those dolls is an understatement in my case. But again, who cares? —*Samai Negrin*



A creepy mannequin wearing a fisherman's coat is standing in an Arnot Pl. backyard in Wood Ridge, terrifying those who pass by. —*L. Gallo*

WHAT'S WITH THE MANNEQUINS?



I pass this abandoned building on Route 23 north in Oak Ridge on the way home from work. I couldn't help notice this eerie female mannequin staring back at me. The sledgehammer resting beside her left leg adds a peculiar twist to an already bizarre scene. —*Joe G.*



I love the back roads of Cumberland County and some times they offer up a nice roadside mannequin. —*Matt Tribulski*



Z is for **ZANISNIK**

Getting Weird with Bryan Z.

by Matt Chrystal

Picture it. Union, NJ. 1991. It's another suburban Sunday morning and the little town center is bustling with people. The sidewalks are randomly littered with white envelopes with "Rent Money" scribbled in chicken-scratch on one side. The writing resembles that of a lefty or maybe that of a child trying to copy the cursive style of his parents. Maybe it was both. The envelopes were slightly torn open with what appeared to be a thin stack of dollar bills sticking out. Occasionally, a curious passerby would stop to inspect, maybe it was trash or maybe it was treasure.

Perhaps, it was a would-be Good Samaritan that stopped or perhaps just someone who assumed it was their lucky day. Whoever it was, would be surprised to find an envelope stuffed with fake money, a plethora of loose notes containing disparaging comments or random jokes and as a bonus, the bottom would filled with fake vomit. The fake vomit was either mixed at home with care or purchased from a recent trip to the Union Market Place. As each victim threw down an envelope in disgust, a roar of laughter could be heard emerging from the backseat of white Saab parking across the street. Bryan Zanisnik had struck again.

Bryan Z. or sometimes just "Z." as he was called in those days was one of my closest friends when he was in seventh grade and I in eighth. Z. was a mad scientist of wacky schemes and ideas, observing his latest public prank from the backseat of his mother's car barely ranked as an odd activity. I mean this was a lanky white kid with a bowl haircut who during the week wore a Catholic school uniform and come the weekend, wore Public Enemy T-shirts and listened to NWA. Z. was known to eat a can of mushrooms as his meal when we came over for pizza and would spend hours videotaping and directing us on how to recreate scenes from blockbuster movies or a sequence from a basketball game that he had just watched on TV.

But as they say, friends go in and out of our lives like busboys in a restaurant. Bryan Z. and I went on to different high schools and somehow lost touch.

Then as fate would have it, just a few years ago, I was walking through an art gallery in Jersey City and saw an exhibit where a guy was wearing what appeared to be a television set on his head.

"Hey, I think I went to school with that guy!"

Sure enough, that guy was Bryan Zanisnik.

My "little buddy" was now looking like a hip professor on campus and was apparently more of a mad scientist than ever. Bryan Z. had grown comfortably into a multi-media performance artist and his creativity and imagination coupled with inspiration from growing up in the Garden State had taken his offbeat ideas to new levels.

Zanisnik's works have been inspired from the smells of the NJ Turnpike, the lure of the Meadowland's swamps and from experiences growing up in Union County.

Over the years, Z. has tangled with novelist, Philip Roth, clashed and collaborated with his parents during live performances and built monuments to honor Christopher Walken. His works have been exhibited throughout the U.S. and have made it over to Europe and Asia.

And while he's come a long way, both geographically and artistically, from pranking people in Union Center, Bryan Z.'s never forgot his roots or lost his fondness for his home state of New Jersey.

Matt Chrystal: In doing my research for this interview, I have seen you labeled as a





Meadowlands Picaresque, installation and performance at the Brooklyn Museum

"contemporary artist working in video, performance, photography and installation." While that's a pretty lengthy title, does that description accurately encapsulate you? Your creativity seems to have no limits and continues to expand across mediums... How do you describe what it is you do?

Bryan Zanisnik: I often joke that if someone met me at a party and I told them about my work I end up sounding like a fake artist. "So what do you do," I'm asked. "I make sculptures, installations, videos, photographs, performances, works on fabric, acting, writing and a few dozen other things..." The truth is I've always been more drawn to ideas than to particular materials. Sometimes these ideas are expressed best in a sculpture, and sometimes they are best in a performance. The only thing I've never done is make traditional drawings. I can't draw for the life of me. I took a drawing class in undergrad and the professor would hold up my drawings to the class as an example of what not to do. I was trying to draw a car but it was so out of proportion that it ended up looking like a monster truck.

Let's get started with some broad strokes here... you have done pieces that incorporate the Meadowlands, the Pine Barrens and you make several references to your upbringing in Union County.... what is it about New Jersey or growing up in New Jersey that has inspired you?

I'm fascinated with New Jersey because it is this place of unknowns. I think that a lot of the state's identity has to do with it being next to New York City. New York City is amazing but it also feels entirely comprehensible. The city makes sense in some way. I've never felt this about New Jersey. It's always felt off to me – in the best ways possible. New York is similar to the ego of consciousness with all its skyscrapers rising above ground and professing confidence and strength. Meanwhile New Jersey with the Meadowlands, Atlantic City and history of Mafia activity is the subconscious – unknown, murky, mysterious and dangerous. As I teenager I had heard about a blind waiter at a Northern New Jersey truck stop who happened to be the best arm wrestler in the state. I drove there one evening with two friends and challenged him to an arm wrestling match. All the truck drivers sitting at the counter gathered around me, it was weird, uncomfortable and scary. This could have never happened in New York City.

In the article you wrote for *Triple Canopy*, in which you chronicled your explorations through the swamps of NJ's Meadowlands, you started off by



When I Was a Child I Caught a Fleeting Glimpse, performance at Hunter College, New York, NY



Monument to Walken in Springfield, NJ



Every Inch a Man, installation and performance at Abrons Arts Center, NYC

saying that the smell of the area drew you to it. I too was always fascinated by that smell growing up and it has given New Jersey quite the reputation. I don't notice the yellow haze in the air anymore and the odor seems to have dissipated. Is it all still there or have our olfactory sense become used to it?

I have to admit that the Meadowlands does not smell as pungent as it once did. I remember as a child having to roll up our windows when my family drove on the Turnpike. That isn't the case anymore. I did read an article in the New York Times in 2009 about a mysterious "maple-syrup" smell that had enveloped New York City. After years of investigation it was discovered the smell was coming from an herbal fragrance factory in North Bergen, NJ. Perhaps the smells are still alive, just a bit more pleasant these days.

Have you been back to the Meadowlands swamps since you wrote that piece? If so, any more run-ins with the police or reunions with hobos? And hey, whatever happened after your were exposed to mercury?

I haven't been back to the Meadowlands in a year or two, mostly because it has become a bit harder to explore with all the recent development happening there. Now you are more likely to run into a construction crew than a hobo encampment. Luckily, there are a few areas around Kearny that haven't changed much over the past decade. As for the exposure to Mercury, I miraculously survived! In all seriousness I think my exposure was so minimal it was nothing to be concerned about. Although I do have a peculiar headache while I am talking to you. I read in an article on Art21, that your piece "A Woman Waits for Me II (2014)" evokes your emotional journey from a reclusive adolescent to the artist you are today. Since I knew you when you were a "reclusive adolescent" and I rediscovered you through your art as adults, I would like to hear more from you in your own words about your transition/growth from being a shy youth to the outgoing artist you are today. Was there a turning point or a gradual change over time?

When I look back upon my childhood I do recall being incredibly shy, but of course there were moments I was outgoing. You and I were friends, and if you recall, we even made a remake of Terminator 2 in my parents' driveway. Maybe I should dig that video up? That aside, as an adult I have become more outgoing and confident, but of course I sometimes feel very shy as well. I think a lot of my performances capture this dichotomy between being shy and outgoing. On the one hand, I am confident enough to perform in front of large audiences, but on the other hand, there is something introverted and introspective in the ways I conceal my body and create performances with practically no movement.

You have incorporated your parents into many of your projects and pieces. There's a very interesting dynamic there that I would love to hear more about. Your parents play many roles within the realm of your artwork including that of your accomplices, collaborators, subjects and assistants. Can you talk about what it was like when you first approached them to be involved in a project and what it has been like to work with them throughout your career?

I first approached my parents about collaborating in my work in 2007. The year before that I had found eight hours of home movies I made with my grandmother when I was thirteen. I would dress her up in a War World II uniform and ask her to crawl across the basement floor shooting Nazis with toy guns. In another video she played an Italian immigrant who hated all Americans. The videos were perverse and disturbing, yet displayed an intimate relationship between a grandmother in front of the camera and a grandson behind. They were also relevant to the current political climate, dealing with timely issues like war and immigration, so I began to edit the raw footage and present them as documents of my youth and portraits of my grandmother.

At first my parents – especially my mother – were concerned how these videos would make my grandmother look. My mother was concerned people would think grandma was senile or crazy. In 2007 I first exhibited the videos, and my mother saw that the audience genuinely celebrated grandma's personality and humor. Seeing this positive reception made it possible for me to ask my parents to perform in future works.



Monument to Walken at Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, NY

I was truly sorry about your mother's passing in 2015, I can fondly recall many of the fun times when she took us to local comic shops, put up with us making home movies and going to Knicks games... As we discussed, your parents have been heavily involved in you work and I was wondering how it has impacted your work, has working with your father after her passing has been cathartic or difficult?

After my mother's passing in early 2015 I decided to no longer present live performances with my parents. I always knew that body of work would end at some point, and I felt that my mother's death was an honorable way to close that chapter. At that point in time I had presented nearly 30 performances with my parents, some performed four or five times each. While both my parents were in each performance, it was my mother who was the dominant performer. Each time we rehearsed she would stop me and say, "I don't want to do this performance your way, I want to do it my way!"

It was a real struggle between director and actor, often with hilarious results. I recall one time in the middle of a performance in Brooklyn she unexpectedly left the gallery, walked down the street to a café and ordered a cup of coffee. A friend said to me afterwards, "I saw your mother at the café during the performance," and all I could respond was, "Well, that was part of the performance."

One of the things I loved about working with my parents was this unplanned and raw aspect of the work. Unlike professional actors, real life intervened and unpredictable, often absurd moments would emerge. Whether it was leaving the gallery midway through a performance, or, another time, my mother whispering to an audience member, "What time is it?" the performances were a blend of reality, fiction, performance and portrait. I felt that they truly captured the complexities, frustration and intimacy of a family.

Speaking of incorporating fellow New Jerseyans into your work, you have projects that literally (see what I did there?) make use of the writings of the Newark, NJ native turned world-renowned novelist, Philip Roth... From my understanding, you were drawn to his "The Great American Novel," by a feeling of that of kindred spirits. But as it turned out Mr. Roth was not quite a fan of the free publicity and basically sent you a cease and desist to refrain from silently reading his books in public. It all sounds pretty ridiculous now but at the time were you flattered, annoyed, or confused? Can you talk about your feelings and what was going through your head as this was happening you.

I think a lot of my performances capture this dichotomy between being shy and outgoing. On the one hand, I am confident enough to perform in front of large audiences, but on the other hand, there is something introverted and introspective in the ways I conceal my body and create performances with practically no movement.



Philip Roth Presidential Library II, installation at Queens Museum, Queens, NY



Meadowlands Picaresque, installation and performance at the Brooklyn Museum, both top and bottom photos.



The legal battle with Philip Roth felt like something straight out of a Philip Roth novel. Basically he claimed that holding his novel in public was a performance of the novel, and that violated his copyright. Of course that seems to be an extreme interpretation of copyright and what is deemed a performance. I worked with an attorney on the matter, and he said if Roth wins this case then people wouldn't be able to silently read his books on the train or in a park, as they'd be "performing" his novel in public without permission. The legal battle went into the media, and shortly thereafter Roth dropped any charges.

When I first received the cease and desist letter I was shocked, and a bit scared. I've never been threatened with a lawsuit before. As time went on, and after I consulted a lawyer, I was less nervous. There was an endless amount of legal documents coming my way, and I began to photocopy the documents and insert them into my installation in the gallery. The exhibition began with Roth only being a small aspect of the work, but by the end the show was really about Roth, copyright and our legal battle.

Where did the idea for the sculpture park of Christopher Walken heads stem from? Where are the heads now? Any future plans for them?

When I was working on a proposal for the Socrates Sculpture Park in Queens, NY, I was drawn to the fact that Christopher Walken grew up in the neighborhood. His family even owned a bakery a few blocks away from the park, called "Walken's Bake Shop." Working with a 3D modeler I created the Walken heads to look like mushrooms, as if Walken's DNA was imbued in the ground and caused Walken mushrooms to spring up every year. That exhibition closed last year, and since then a few of the Walken heads are traveling and a few are hanging out in Springfield, New Jersey. I even set one aside in case Christopher Walken wants one for his garden.

You have had residencies, exhibits and workshops in places like NYC, Los Angeles, Miami, Prague and China. Was there a certain project or a moment of creation when you knew that what you were doing here in NJ/NY was catching on and getting noticed worldwide?

It's difficult to say if there was one particular work or moment where I felt that things were really taking off. I know that going to graduate school at Hunter College in New York City really benefited me. I met a lot of amazing artists there, and was lucky enough to have the time to develop my work slowly over the course of several years.

With all these travels to exotic lands far and wide, have you had any weird or interesting tales of adventures you can share?

When I was in China in 2011 I bought a Chinese army hat with a red star on it, the hat made famous by Mao last century. I bought the hat because I thought it looked cool, and because the sun was incredibly strong and I needed the shade. I had no idea that walking down the street almost every Chinese citizen I passed would salute me. Children would stand next to me for a photo, us both saluting side by side. An entire bus even slowed down and all the passengers saluted me in sync. I was in Guangzhou, a city not visited by many western tourists, and I think the sight of a westerner wearing a red star cap was hilarious and absurd to everyone living there.

Does any place out there compare to the weirdness of the good ole Garden State?

I am happy to say I have yet to visit a place as weird as New Jersey.

Can you peel back the curtain on anything you are currently working on?

For past last year I have been learning how to identify edible mushrooms in the forest. So far I can safely identify about eight different species, including giant puffballs, which can easily weigh over ten pounds. I'm starting to make some new work that is inspired by my mushroom expeditions, so stay tuned.

Where can we go to keep up with you and find out all the goings on in the world of Bryan Zanisnik? Rumor has it, you just revamped your website to prepare for the influx of *Weird NJ* fans!

You can find me on Instagram and Facebook as BryanZanisnik, and on my website www.zanisnik.com.

Editors note: Author Phillip Roth passed away on May 22nd, 2018.



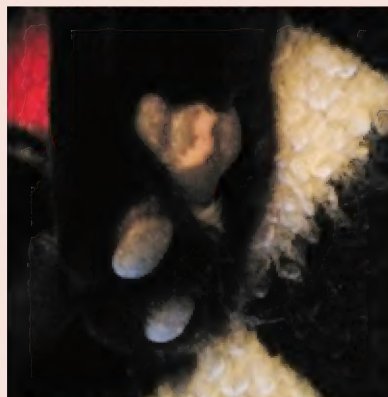
Z. in Sweden, 2016.



Philip Roth Presidential Library, installation at Locust Projects, Miami, FL

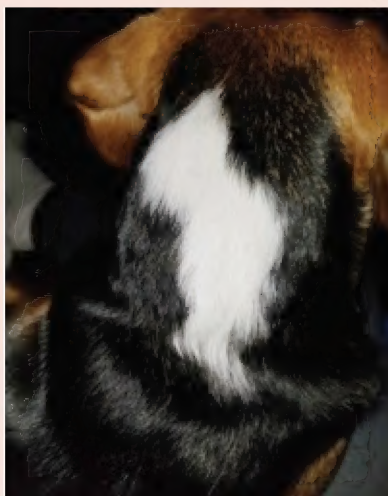


I grabbed a dog treat for my dog, Legend, and noticed that it looked like NJ! -Tara Lang, Harrison



I was petting my four-year-old black cat named Jack Foo the other day and noticed his back pad had an odd pigment shape. I turned it to look at a different angle and there was NJ!

-Shannon Barney



Our rescue beagle from Kentucky seems to have the state of New Jersey on her neck! -Tara, from Toms River

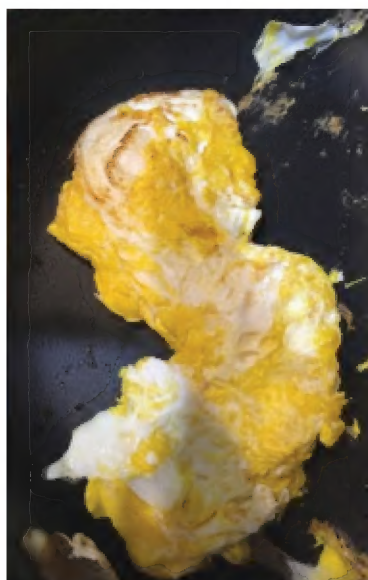
A WEIRD NJ STATE OF MIND



We were waiting in line at our local Dunkin' Donuts and saw this car in front of us. -Kevin and Jake



I was making dinner chicken cutlets and after I was done cooking them I noticed this beauty! I gave my kids Cape May because it was the crispiest part. I'm a Jersey girl so I thought the resemblance was pretty cool. -Adam Erika Dreher



Eggs on the Jersey Side.

-M. Sweets



I found this pita chip on Sept 17, 2013, in a bag of Stacey's Simply Bruschetta Pita Chips. -Carl Petlik



Was splitting some pitch pine for a woodstove down here at Log Swamp. It even shows LBI! -Dave Nothstein



Photo by Brian Gresh.



It's pumpkin season, time to find a weird pumpkin at Dreyer Farms in Cranford. -Tim Davies



I found this on a tree at Allaire State Park in Wall, NJ.

-Tom Someone



I always see NJ-shaped paraphernalia in your issues and thought I should share this rock I found at South Mountain Reservation today. -Rylar



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ALL OLDER BACK ISSUES, T-SHIRTS, HOODED SWEAT-SHIRTS, HATS, WEIRD STATE BOOKS AND ANYTHING ELSE WE HAVE HAD IN OUR CATALOG IN THE PAST MUST NOW BE ORDERED ONLINE BECAUSE OF LIMITED AVAILABILITY.

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Three Early Weird NJ Issues Are Back From The Dead

Be careful what you wish for, because you very well may get it! And if you want to get it, now is the time, because we've got it, but not for long.

We have reissued our early magazines, Issues #4, #5 and #6, for the *Weird NJ* collector and purist. With hundreds of letters asking us how to get some of the early issues, we have finally been able to recreate them for everyone that has pleaded with us to do so.

This limited edition set will be available only while supplies last. Get in the Wayback Machine and travel back in time to when we were below the underground, producing *Weird NJ* as a home-made fanzine. See the sites the way we discovered them for the first time. With typewriter and paste, we put together the early issues of what would eventually become *Weird NJ* as you know it today.

For everyone that wasn't around from the beginning, or for people who came aboard with Issue #8, these early issues represent an idea we had to start a publication like none that had been tried before. In their original form, less than 1,000 of these issues were released. But now, for a short time, we will offer these issues up for anyone who wants to see where *Weird NJ* had its beginnings. Once they are gone, they will never be published again. Now is your chance to grab a piece of *Weird NJ* history. This three issue set sells for \$20 (including postage and handling).



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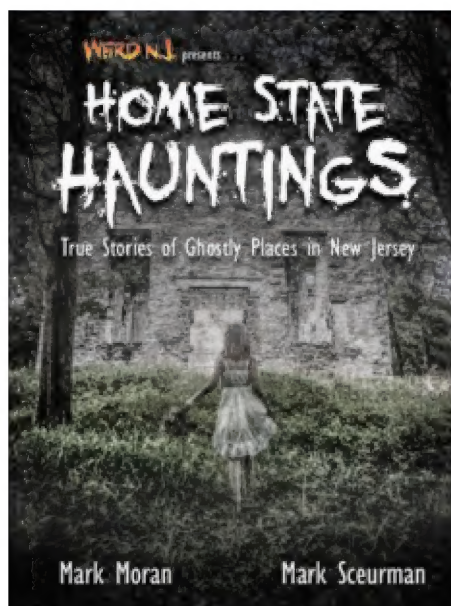
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Weird NJ Presents... HOME STATE HAUNTINGS: True Stories of Ghostly Places in New Jersey

Weird NJ's Home State Hauntings: True Stories of Ghostly Places in NJ. It is a state-of-the-art compendium of ghost stories from around the Garden State. This special issue has been beautifully designed by photographer and graphic artist Paul Michael Kane. *Weird NJ* has been collecting and compiling tales of otherworldly apparitions from all corners of this state for 23 years now, so if it goes bump in the night anywhere in the NJ, chances are we've heard about it. Featuring stories of some familiar haunts from the past as well as many never before published tales, *Home State Hauntings* is the definitive collection of Garden State ghost stories. Here now for the first time we present these tales to you in this one spine-tingling publication.

About Home State Hauntings...

The notion that the souls of the dead are all around us as we live our daily lives is a weird one indeed. The thought of them inhabiting all the places we feel most familiar with—our homes, schools, libraries and theatres—can be unnerving, to say the least.

There seem to be just too many convincing stories of people's encounters with ghosts for them not to exist. As far back as anyone can remember there have been accounts of people seeing, hearing and feeling apparitions of an otherworldly nature. Here in New Jersey is no exception. Our state has a long and rich history of paranormal activity, spirited spooks and things that go bump in the night. At *Weird NJ* we are fortunate enough to get to hear these stories firsthand from the people who experienced them. And, rather than try to recount them for you, we prefer to pass these stories along as they were told to us by the people who lived them. If you are a believer in ghosts these tales might help reinforce what you already suspect to be true. If you are a skeptic they might just seem like amusing goose bump reading. Perhaps, if you are on the fence about the paranormal, some of the stories in this book might convince you one way or another.

In *Home State Hauntings* you will hear tales from the Garden State's most haunted hot spots—our graveyards, schools, hotels and houses—all told by the people who lived through the terrifying experiences. These are the stories of otherwise regular citizens of the Garden State—our neighbors, friends, family and coworkers. But they tell us they have had encounters that are incredible, yet somehow credible—unbelievable, yet we are compelled to believe them. So, based on what you read, you will have to decide for yourself. Are these harrowing accounts of ghostly encounters all just fabrications of overactive imaginations? You be the judge. While we don't always know if we believe the ghostly stories we hear, we certainly get the sense that the person telling them wholeheartedly believes them. Do you? \$10 (includes postage). Also available in ebook form for your iPad, Nook and Kindle devices at iTunes, Amazon.com or bn.com.

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NOW AVAILABLE! Weird Ghosts

True tales of the eeriest legends and hair-raising hauntings across America.

Compiled by Joanne M. Austin, Presented by Mark Moran and Mark Scurman with many illustrations by Ryan Doan.

This spooky, spine-tingling collection of supernatural stories from across the US will tantalize the paranormal palate of anyone fascinated by haunted houses, ghostly graveyards, historic haunts, or spirited saloons. Some of these spots are open to the public, while others allow no visitors. Witnesses tell terrifyingly true tales of cursed roads, ghoulish schools, eerie eateries and more—so, prepared to be scared!

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That's right! 23 postcards of some of the weirdest places in NJ! In book form, each postcard comes with a perforated edge and can be easily removed from the binding. Postcards are 6X4. \$10 (including shipping and handling).

DEATH ON THE DEVIL'S TEETH

Paperback book, 224 illustrated pages. \$25.00 includes postage and handling. It was a case that shook a small New Jersey community to its core.

On August 7th, 1972, sixteen-year-old Jeannette DePalma walked out of her suburban Springfield home, and into the realm of urban legend. She had planned to hitchhike to a friend's house before an afternoon shift at work. She would never make it.

Six weeks after seeming to have vanished into thin air, the body of Jeannette DePalma was found after a local dog brought the teenager's decomposed arm back to its owner. A search party discovered the rest of her remains high atop a cliff inside an abandoned quarry. For decades, this jagged outcropping of rock had been known to locals as the Devil's Teeth.

The girl's body was so badly decomposed that a cause of death could not be determined. According to the first-responders who climbed the Devil's Teeth, Jeannette was found surrounded by occult objects, suggesting that some kind of ritual sacrifice had taken place.

Rumors of witchcraft and Satanism were splashed across the headlines of every local paper in the county. The terrified citizens of Springfield began to demand answers. How could something like this happen in such a nice, middle-class community? The DePalma family suggested to reporters that Jeannette could

have been targeted by Satanists or modern-day witches due to her activity within their church.

While the police and the public were being distracted by these bizarre rumors, connections to other strange events occurring in the area were being overlooked—including the deaths of several other young women close by. As time went on, the DePalma case vanished from the headlines, and the residents of Springfield seemed more than happy to forget the event, despite the fact that no arrests were ever made.

For decades, Jeannette seemed destined to become nothing more than a vague memory—her death being the stuff of campfire tales. Then, in the late 1990s, anonymous letters began to flood the office of a local independent magazine called *Weird New Jersey*. As *Weird NJ*'s Mark Moran and Jesse Pollack tried to research this almost mythic cold case, they encountered numerous roadblocks, such as the Springfield police claiming to have lost Jeannette's case file in a flood, and the hesitancy of the slain teenager's acquaintances to go on the record to tell what they knew. Undeterred, Pollack and Moran continued to dig deeper into this mysterious and baffling case, and shocking discoveries would be made. Now—four decades after the murder of Jeannette DePalma—the truth can finally be told.

For more information please visit www.JeannetteDePalma.com.

